THESES BOOK

Alicia Cheng and Sarah Gephart
2
Yoonjai Choi
30
Neil Donnelly
40
Sebastian Campos, Mike Gallagher, Rebecca Gimenez, and Andrew Shurtz
47
Geoff Han
84
Tamara Maletic and Dan Michaelson
89
Mark Owens
125
David Reinfurt
138
Grace Robinson-Leo
167
Ryan Waller
199
Dave Yun
209

Alicia Cheng and
Sarah Gephart

Deft hands wrapping a gift. The fingers of cigar makers. The practiced gestures of a traffic cop. These infinitely precise and subtle movements are seductive by virtue of their constant repetition and sublimated refinement. Regularized for efficiency, the gestures are beautiful in their mechanistic fluidity.

Everyday experience can be seen as a performance where the pedestrian players take the stage and unconsciously perform with the practiced aplomb of veterans.

These fleeting spectacles do not cater to an expectant audience but instead may only be briefly noted by passersby. But what if someone tried to express the poetic and ephemeral aspects of these subtle physical spectacles?

The act of describing even the simplest actions require a fusing of word and action: an oral account may best be complimented by a gesticulation or sound, a graphic icon may need a real time reenactment to be fully understood.



The retelling of any experience, either simple or those that defy description, often requires a mad combination of illustrative methods, creating the most vivid reenactment the teller can muster.

01.14

Descriptive strategies to quantify the lived experience can range from universal representations of a generalized concept to hyper-inclusionary symbolic methods that seek to cover any and all possible variables.

Each descriptive method aspires to communicate faithfully and efficiently through its own vocabulary, but to accurately convey the lived experience these languages must work in tandem and compensate when one or the other fails.

This matrix of methods creates a new language: experience into experience, turning the act of telling into an event unto itself.

01.22

Sarah Gephart
STATEMENT

Instructions, if followed, promise perfection or reward: the correct way to behave legally, morally, socially or safely; the right way to construct or assemble parts; the proper dosage; the tried and true way. They guide us through new experiences and teach us new actions. From simple and practical little reminders (park here, walk now, twist to open) to complex one-time actions (how to set up your computer; tile your bathroom; learn a new dance step) instructions are part of our everyday life. Out of the complexity and confusion of daily life, instructions offer a script that reduces the decisions that we must make. As straightforward as the numerical sequence of step 1, step 2, step 3, instructions break down complicated actions into a series of known and imitable steps.

As a designer, I am attracted to the formal qualities of drawn instructions: shaped arrows, dotted lines representing time and movement, simultaneous views, floating hands, lack of perspective, truncation of time. Drawn instructions allow a level of abstraction, simplification and simultaneous layered views that photography does not. In the attempt to be clear, simple, and direct, I find the results are often humorous or inspiring in their sincerity. Their seeming lack of self-conscious design is nearly a design strategy in itself. In the complicated semiotics of design, instructions seem to represent a straightforward attempt to explain or present information. However, instructions cannot be viewed as transparent. Although they may strive for a kind of universal neutrality, the underlying style of the instruction conveys as much information as the surface message.

Instructions clearly include the viewer. Cropped body parts, perspective, generic or abstracted figures, and directive language speak directly to the viewers and allow them to place themselves within the picture or diagram. The depicted experience becomes the viewer's experience. Conceptually, I am fascinated by the idea of daily minutia being prescribed by someone or something, whether the instruction is a direct reminder to 'push' open a door, shake the orange juice container, or a subtle subconscious way that I tilt my head after looking through a magazine.

As well as aiding users through lived experiences, instructions can also provide a fantasy experience for them. By graphically presenting a neat, clean procedure, the viewer can feel reassured that their experience will be similar – as in airplane safety instructions. When extraneous details are eliminated or simplified in instructions, they become both easier to read and more inviting to the user. With lifestyle instructions or guidebooks, the viewer can vicariously experience something that might be out of reach or opposite to their present situation. Instructions provide people a way of modeling their lives after an ideal.

Wrigley's Gum

Before settling on instructions as the focus of my thesis, I saved a wrapper from a stick of Wrigley's Orbit chewing gum. Perhaps out of multi-lingual good will, the wrapper has an illustration depicting the proper method for disposing of the gum **fig. 1**. The drawing is a quirky mixture of abstraction and detail, the use of familiar symbols and creative pictograms all within a limited space and limited palette. Reading left to right, a pair of light blue, femininely bow-shaped lips are suggestively parted to allow a dark blue dot to escape out the side (the gum). While the lips have a white highlight for glossy detail, the gum itself is abstracted down to a perfect circle. To the right of the gum-circle, a light blue arrow leads the viewer's eye to an identical blue circle (of the same size and at the same level as the first circle). This second gum-circle is placed on top of an outline drawing of a wrapper held between the thumb and index finger of a hand. You know that the rectangle in the hand is a wrapper because of the exaggerated serrated edge. The lips and the hand bear no visual similarity due their different styles, yet they are clearly linked by the gum. A second light blue arrow leads the viewer to the third and final drawing of a figure throwing a piece of paper into a trash can. The style of the figure and trash can are copies of familiar symbols seen on outdoor public trash cans. The abstracted human figure has a circle for a head, triangular arm and legs, and a torso which slightly separates from the lower body as the figure bends over toward the can. An outline drawing complete with exaggerated wire detail indicates the can. While the gum stayed the same size when it was repeated, the wrapper in the final drawing bears no relationship to the middle drawing – in fact it appears to have grown from palm- to newspaper-size. Yet the blue arrow clearly links the drawings and the recognizability of the trash figure makes it an easy read.

All these little details attracted me to this instruction: the lack of consistent scale, the repetition, the mixture of familiar symbols with original drawings. The design is about conveying a message in the most efficient way possible (with some allowances for sexy lips). The fact that the message is so mundane and non-vital only adds to its charm – and probably accounts for the quirkiness; no one is missing their flight because of the inconsistency of the symbols.

Fra Angelico

The visual qualities of the gum wrapper's instructions remind me of Early Renaissance paintings. In Fra Angelico's 'Christ Mocked' a long narrative is condensed into one picture plane through fragmentation and icons to a shorthand 'index' of moments in the story **fig. 2**. Thus, a single painting in

fig. 1

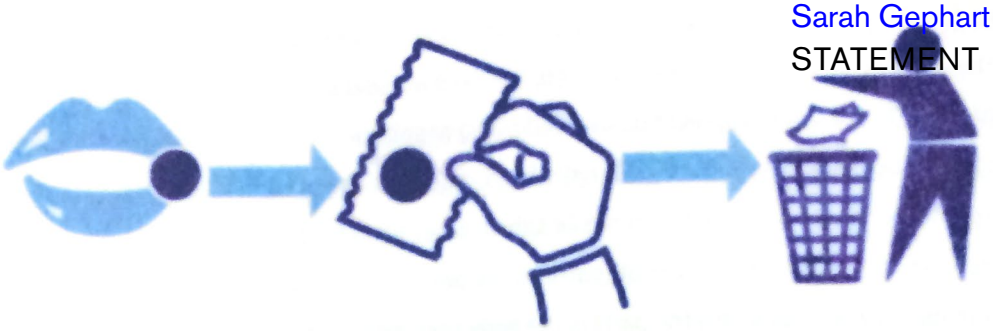


fig. 2



an isolated monk's cell illustrates a long narrative by allowing the monk to read the signs and complete the story himself. The painting depicts a blindfolded christ sitting on a simple red box in the center of a flat field of green. He holds in his left hand a round yellow object and a raised stick in his right hand. To the left, a cropped human head blows or spits on christ, while a disembodied hand lifts the hat of this character. Closer to Christ's head, a second disembodied hand holds the sponge of vinegar to his mouth while on the opposite side another hand holds a stick hitting christ's head. Two more floating hands surround christ (perhaps his own) one in prayer the other open in a gesture of acceptance. By depicting only the parts of the body performing actions, they become symbolic rather than representational. Yet, the careful depiction of the ruggedness of the spitter's face (emphasizing his brutal character) and the peaceful expression on christ's face, his closed eyes barely visible under the blindfold, provide more realistic and descriptive information. The painting can be read in a similar manner as the gum wrapper: the iconic and familiar hand positions are readable in the same way as the recognizable trash figure on the wrapper; the depiction of the spitting represents time and motion on a two dimensional plane similar to the arrows on the wrapper; both use cropping of the figure to show a series of events in one plane. On a very small scale, the detail of the gloss on the gum chewer's lips gives the wrapper instruction a sense of personality and subjectivity that infuses Fra Angelico's painting in details like the transparency of christ's blindfold.

The issue of how much to abstract in an effort to make universal and how much detail to add for specificity and clarity constantly comes up with visual instructions. And instructions run the full spectrum from purely abstract to realistic imagery. Visually speaking, the most purely abstract approach is to use the alphabet and write the instructions. However direct, written language reduces the universality of the message. The language of abstract symbols such as stop signs and arrows must be learned, but are not language-specific. A more pictographic step are iconic figures such as the isotypes of Otto Neurath. The level of detail in a drawn instruction is often determined by the purpose of the instruction or is left up to the artist's discretion. Realistic details such as fingernails or hair add a sense of specificity to the instruction.

The most realistic instructions are shown through using photography and video. These provide the most complexity of information through detail and temporal sequence. Film could be seen as the most objective way of presenting instruction because imagery is not filtered through someone's hand as in drawing. Yet detail and specificity can get in the way of the information; backgrounds add to visual noise and details such as the clothes, gender and appearance of people performing the actions can distract the viewer from the message. Drawings allow more room for explaining things that can't be perceived in the real world; layered views, cut-a-ways, and x-ray vision all provide information not

permitted by a photograph[↓]. Personally, I am attracted to those instructions that use several levels of abstraction and specific details simultaneously. Most commonly instructions combine both text and image. The image may illustrate the text or the text may annotate the image with varying degrees of relatedness. A visual tension exists that allows the viewer to read several different ways at once which makes a more complete experience or richer story (even if it is simply learning to throw away gum).

Toothbrush

A common location for instructions is on packaging – letting the user know how to care for, put together and use the product inside. Another favorite instruction I found is on the back of a Japanese toothbrush **fig. 4, fig. 5**. Although I cannot read the written Japanese instructions, I can clearly understand the drawings – a good example of the multilingual usefulness of drawn instructions. From these instructions, I know that I should hold my toothbrush at a 45° angle to my teeth; push the brush back and forth across my teeth in increments of 5mm; and the brush is not good when the originally upright bristles become frayed. Primarily, I love the specificity of these instructions – there are no approximations here. I cannot remember back to a time when I did not know how to brush my teeth – I can remember dental hygienists earnestly visiting my elementary school with giant model teeth and games of 'flying the airplane' into our stretched open mouths. But even back then I already knew how to brush my teeth, at least better than I understood what 45 degrees was. So who are these instructions for? Are these for people painfully worried that they are not brushing their teeth correctly? Maybe there are literate people who never learned how to brush their teeth? Perhaps these drawings are just to make the brand of toothbrush look official, scientifically precise, or user friendly.

Regardless of the purpose for these instructions, visually, they are very appealing. The single weight line used to draw them gives them a simple, clean and cute appearance. Yet, because of the simplicity of the style, the drawings also open themselves up to multiple readings. I understand what they are instructing, but I wonder if I could read them the same if I saw them out of the context of a toothbrush package. Is the brush actually a rake and the single isolated tooth a cabbage sitting on top of a mound

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[↑] See Tufte, Edward, *Visual Explanations*, p.57, 'Multiple, layered views exemplify the special power of diagrams, a capacity to show places or activities that we are unable to see directly from one fixed viewpoint in the real world...In the world of the diagram, showing a sequence of changes over time is identical to showing adjacent layers of information; on paper, time and space are as one. Multiple positions signal either temporal or spatial adjacency, movement or arrest.'

of dirt? Turned upside down the used toothbrush resembles a squid – but then why does it have an 'x' next to it? It is this type of ambiguity that makes the designer-as-instructor's life more difficult as we try to be both precise and clear yet simple and efficient. For me, however, this ambiguity is also the most interesting aspect to instructional design because it is where the reader's personal, cultural, and imaginative interpretations are allowed to exist.

fig. 3

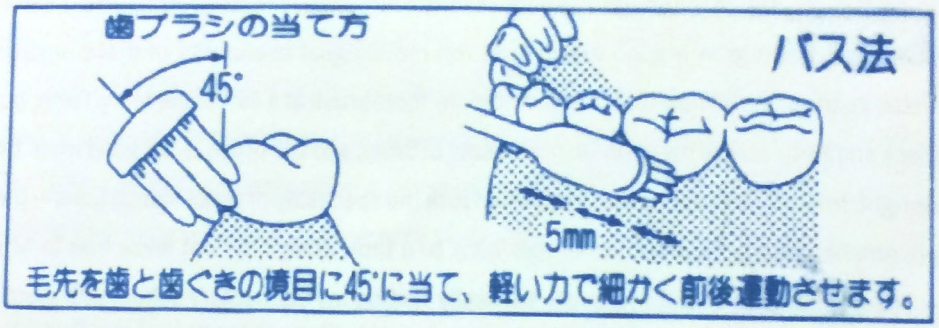
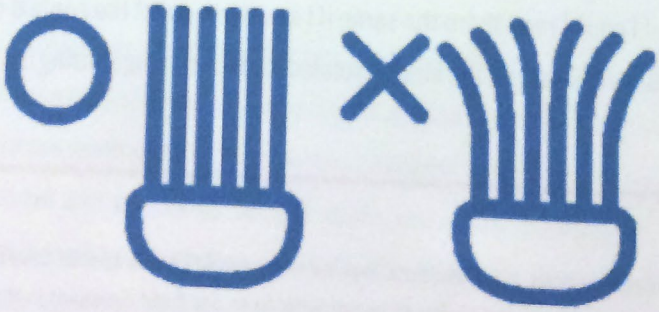


fig. 4



Sarah Gephart
STATEMENT

I am not a big fan of comic books, however, in many ways, drawn instructions are similar to comics. The issues of abstraction, representation, the subjective quality of the drawing style, storytelling aspects, and the reduction of time and motion into a series of drawings are found in both comics and instructions. Scott McCloud gives a comprehensive explanation of how cartoons work in his book *Understanding Comics:*

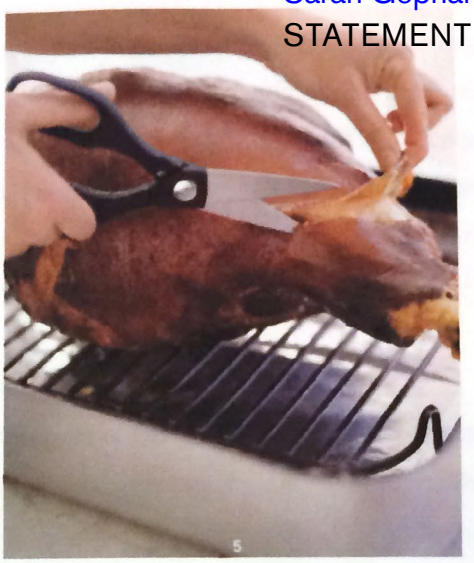
When drawing the face and figure, nearly all comics artists apply some small measure of cartooning. Even the more realistic adventure artists are a far cry from photo realists! Storytellers in all media know that a sure indicator of audience involvement is the degree to which the audience identifies with a story's characters. And since viewer-identification is a speciality of cartooning, cartoons have historically held an advantage in breaking into world popular culture. On the other hand, no one expects audiences to identify with brick walls or landscapes and indeed, backgrounds tend to be slightly more realistic. In some comics, the split is far more pronounced. The Belgian 'clear-line' style of Hergé's Tintin combines very iconic characters with unusually realistic backgrounds. This combination allows readers to mask themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world. One set of lines to see. Another set of lines to be.

← McCloud, Scott
Understanding Comics,
pp. 42-43

The 'viewer-identification' that Scott McCloud mentions as part of cartoons is also a crucial part of instructions. Instructions are, after all, a story that the viewer reads in order to be able to perform some task themselves. By abstracting the figure as in an isotype or by showing only part of the body, the viewer is able to project themselves into the action. We become that stick figure throwing away the gum. The viewer is also included in the instruction in the sense that they must complete the story themselves by filling in the gaps between the moments depicted. For example, with the gum wrapper the viewer understands that between the first and second images the hand has moved up to the mouth, the mouth has spit the gum on to the wrapper and the hand has swung away from the mouth. Between the second and third drawings, the figure has positioned itself next to a trash can and wadded up the gum and wrapper. Of course, the intended end result of instructions is that some action is then performed by the user. In this final step, we interpret the flat instruction and make it our own multidimensional experience.

fig. 5





Martha Stewart Living:

The shelter and lifestyle magazine *Martha Stewart Living* provides tips on decorating, cooking, entertaining and shopping. The world Martha depicts is beautiful, organized, and clean. The magazine markets nostalgia for a past where life was simpler and there was time to bake bread, have a garden, wash your sweaters, and carve pumpkins with cameo motifs. On one level, *Living* can be read as a fictional story in the same way as the comics Scott McCloud described. It provides a fantasy world in which the reader can insert themselves. By picturing clear, followable instructions for making or doing things, Martha brings the fantasy closer to the reader, who could actually live her perfect life if she/he had the time, property, or patience. What *Living* provides is similar to the ornamental cookery Roland Barthes discusses in *Mythologies:*

This ornamental cookery is indeed supported by wholly mythical economics. This is an openly dream-like cookery, as proved in fact by the photographs in Elle, which never show the dishes except from a high angle, as objects at once near and inaccessible, whose consumption can be perfectly well accomplished simply be looking. It is, in the fullest meaning of the word, a cuisine of advertisement, totally magical, especially when one remembers that this magazine is widely read in small income groups.

← Barthes, Roland
Mythologies,
p. 70

Substitute 'short depth-of-field' for 'from a high angle' and you get a good description of the aesthetic of *Living* and the function of the photographic instructions.

Sarah Gephart
STATEMENT

The aesthetics of *Living* are part of an entire lifestyle package – a beautiful, well organized, clean, and easy to follow magazine is equated with a beautiful life. The visuals of the instructions are an integral part of the magazine. Take 'Ham 101' as an example (April 1996) **fig. 5**. Cooking a ham is not the most beautiful task to explain and photograph, but under the careful *Living* art direction, it looks simple, pretty and appetizing. The story is told through a series of identically sized color photographs, set in a grid with tastefully small numbers centered at the bottom of each picture. These numbers lead you through and correspond to written instructions beneath. With the pictures and written instructions on the same page we can easily read both at the same time. The colors in the photographs are limited to avoid any garishness: the backgrounds are either the white marble of the counter top or solid white light; the utensils and pans are gleaming silver metal. These elements contrast nicely with the pinkish brown of the ham. The shadows in the photos have a purplish tint which matches the purple type of the call outs in the text. In step one the ingredients are artfully laid out, the bag of spices is tipped over and slightly spilled, each item is already measured out and sitting in its own little dish. In step three, when the spices must be ground, they are done so with an old ceramic mortar and pestle. When hands are shown in steps 5, 9 and 10, they are immaculately clean, youthful, and although they are feminine the nails are cut short and unpolished. Like the ornamental cookery that Barthes describes, these ham instructions act as an advertisement not for cooking but for a way of living: ordered, simple, clean and healthy.

In a special issue devoted to the care of clothes, a similar aestheticising of instructions is carried throughout **fig. 6**. Each photographic step is artfully composed and the colors are kept to a pleasing palette. When illustrations are called for instead of photographs these are tastefully drawn with fine lines and subtle colors↓. This contrasts starkly with the washing instructions found on a box of Tide, printed on the back of the box in the same hot red and orange Tide uses to attract buyers on the front **fig. 7**. Rather than photographs, illustrations are drawn with thick bold lines resembling comic books more than the old botany book look of Martha. The numbers and text are in bold italics giving them a sense of loud urgency. If you look closely, the nails on the feminine ~~Tide~~→hands are rather long and shapely. In my minds eye, I imagine the Martha Stewart character carefully doing the

↑See Tufte, Edward, *Visual Explanations*, p73. 'Make all visual distinctions as subtle as possible, but still clear and effective. Relevant to nearly every display of data, the smallest effective difference is the Occam's razor ('what can be done with fewer is done in vain with more') of information design.'

fig. 6

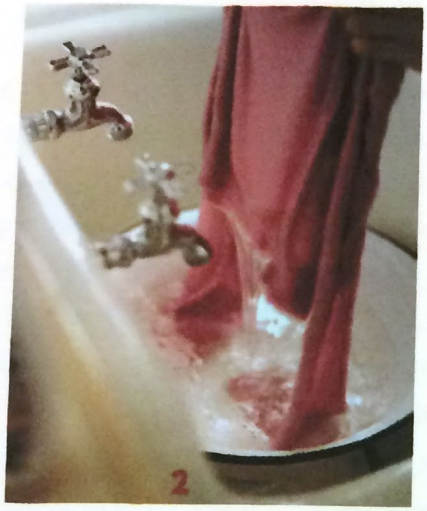




fig. 7



laundry listening to NPR and humming Mozart while on a split screen the Tide mother frantically pops in a load listening to the local rock station above the noise of the kids yelling. Beyond simply providing information, instructions tell stories and provide lifestyle messages through their means of presentation and the 'non-informational' details. The fact that these secondary design elements may be subconsciously added by the illustrator means they might be part of some collective sensibilities pertaining to our society and decade. For instance, I surmise from the tide box that more women than men must do the laundry. Similarly, judging from the feminine lips on the gum wrapper, perhaps women also chew more sugarless gum. On the other hand, these could also be very conscious elements of the instructions and dictated by months of careful market research.

fig. 8

The Best Position for a Drainboard

FORTUNATELY I was able to have my drainboard changed from the right to the *left* of the sink, which is always the one best position for a drainboard. Now I pick up a plate with my left hand, scour it with the cloth held in the right hand, and lay the plate on the tray with my left hand, without changing hands or passing my left arm across my right arm. My left hand is capable of repeating the "laying-down motion" very fast and very easily, while the right hand never drops the cloth, but scours one dish after another rapidly. Try it and see the difference it makes. Had I not been able to change the drainboard from right to left I might have wheeled a table to the *left* side of the sink. I also bought a wire dish-drainer costing 50 cents, and a soap-shaker, a dish-mop and a plate-scraper costing 10 cents each. Then I carefully separated the whole process into three operations: scraping and stacking, washing, drying and laying away.

My first step was: Pots and pans filled with water. Dishes scraped with plate-scraper and stacked as to size, at right of worker. Towels to hand, hot suds made in pan by soap-shaker.

My second step was: Glassware placed in pan, washed with mop or small-handled brush in right hand, lifted to drain-rack with left hand. Silver placed to soak in pan, while glass is dried, sorted, placed on tray and carried to place. Repeat process with silver, drying and sorting on to tray at the same time, and remove to place.

My third step was: Dishes of same kind placed in pan, washed, lifted out by left hand to dish-drainer. Pour scalding water on dishes in drainer, and leave to dry without wiping, while the pots and pans are scoured with a combination wire-bristle brush. If there is a hot-water faucet a method that saves still more steps and time is to attach a foot or two of rubber hose and spray the dishes from the nozzle. Dishes are dry by the time pots are finished. Lift dishes from drainer, sort and stack on to tray, and carry to place. Hang up pots, pans and all utensils. Rinse out towels and hang to dry.

Note, please, that my drainer is at my *left* and the dishes are stacked to the *right*. (The ideal arrangement is a drainboard on *each* side of the sink.) This will make a difference of ten minutes on a task requiring forty-five minutes. Note also that dishes, and particularly silver, are sorted as laid down on the tray. Note that the drainer does away with all wiping of the dishes. This cuts the time down considerably and saves the necessity of rubbing each piece with a dish-towel of doubtful cleanliness. While the dishes are drying the pots are cleaned with a wire-bristle brush.

"Don't you wipe the dishes at all?" some woman will ask. What is the use, when it is unnecessary and takes useless time? The glass must be wiped, of course, because very hot water cannot be poured on it; silver must be wiped, because it doesn't dry itself as china does. Rinsing in scalding water gives china a better gloss than hand polishing.

← Fredrick, Christine
'The New Housekeeping: How it Helps the Woman Who Does Her Own Work'
in The Ladies Home Journal,
September, 1912 p. 13

Sarah Gephart
STATEMENT

Ladies Home Journal, 1912

Sarah Gephart
STATEMENT

Magazines have functioned as guidebooks for a long time. In the 1880's the *Ladies Home Journal* started as a column in a weekly newspaper. Soon thereafter it turned into a monthly supplement and eventually into a magazine of its own. Primarily a commercial product, the magazine addressed women's lives with a practical emphasis while identifying and fostering women as a growing consumer base. Through both fiction and nonfiction in the text, and illustrations, the magazine helped define gender roles both directly and indirectly while the advertising helped women identify themselves as successful via consumption↓. The magazine reached women across the country thus spreading social values and norms. 'Many of the advice writers provided etiquette lessons about men or about social issues, reminding readers of values supposedly already shared by the readership, but nonetheless warranted repeating. In 'The Ideas of a Plain Country Woman,' ...the practical writer reminded readers continuously of the values that formed the basis, as she saw it, of the society' (Scanlon, Jennifer, *Inarticulate Longings*, p.24) Prescriptive advice reached a climax in the magazine in Christine Fredrick's column 'The New Housekeeping: How it Helps the Woman Who Does Her Own Work.' In this forum, she imported ideas of ergonomics and efficiency from the business world and applied them to the home. Her first article from September 1912, is devoted to washing dishes **fig. 8**. She describes in great detail her past and reformed processes, telling the reader exactly what the height of their sink should be, the sequence of washing the dishes, what each hand should hold, and the motions of each hand.

Wallpaper*

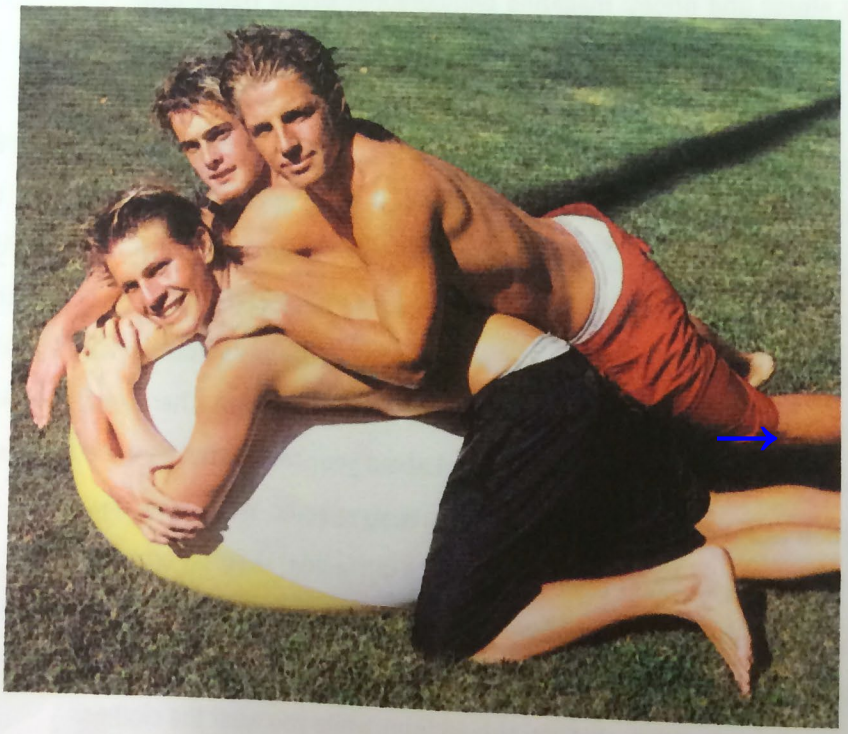
Another lifestyle magazine which I consider the Martha Stewart of the hip, urban, young professional is *Wallpaper**. Again, it acts as a purveyor of fantasy while doling out decorating ideas, vacation plans, and the location of stores where everything can be purchased (Moss, Troy, any place in Stockholm...). The predominant listing of stores and prices functions similarly to the detailed instructions in *Living*, they bring the fantasy closer by putting it seemingly within the reader's reach. While with Martha you apparently only need time and her taste to achieve her life, with *Wallpaper** you need the credit cards. *Wallpaper** differentiates from other shelter magazines and functions more like a guidebook through

↑Damon-Moore, Helen, *Magazines for the Millions.*

fig. 9



fig. 10



its use of models. Most photographs of spaces in architecture magazines exclude people (and any messy trace of them) in the display of the architecture. In *Wallpaper**, however, the pages are littered with well dressed, wan models, looking bored and glamorous **fig. 9**. These characters are impossible ideals; 'like a perverse version of Otto Neurath's isotypes' (Andrea Codrington); they are characterless, nameless, interchangeable and so calculatedly hip that they become 'out' as soon as the magazine hits the stands. Rather than being abstracted like isotypes or cropped like the hands in *Living*, these models are idealized in a different manner. The frozen moments of the photographs are as staged and perfected as drawn illustration; only the important and carefully selected elements are shown. The facts that most of the pictures are of constructed sets, the model's dress is pinned, the furniture is rented, and the messy crew and duck-taped lighting are on the other side of the camera is eliminated from the final picture. Similar to a cinema audience, the magazine readers are passive voyeurs of the *Wallpaper** world. Yet, like completing the action between depicted instances in pictogram instructions, the viewer supplies their own narrative to the suggestive images.

Abercrombie + Fitch:

For me, the connection of contemporary fashion/lifestyle magazines with instruction manuals reaches its most obvious and didactic culmination in Abercrombie and Fitch's 'Back to School issue 98.' The fact that this is a catalogue and not a magazine seems nominal when you consider the way *Wallpaper** lists stores and prices: magazine photographer Bruce Weber took the photographs for A&F, and they list the price of the catalogue as $5 on the cover (I did not pay for mine). Between pages showing clothes silhouetted on white such as 'Flurry Cap: A. navy, B. grey, C. orange,...' pages of full bleed images show beautiful teens in various acts of college life - rough housing on the lawn with mouths wide open in delight or moodily half dressed lounging in bed **fig. 10**. In addition, there are pages mimicking magazine editorial with headlines such as 'Survival,' 'Journal,' 'Culture,' 'Ask A&F...' This is where the instruction via the viewer's vicarious projection of herself/himself into the photographs meets didactic 'lift to open' type of instruction. The catalogue all but advises 'if you want this lifestyle, besides buying these clothes here are the movies to see and like, here are the books to read, here are the foods to eat, here are the ways to feel about your roommate, here are the places to go, here is the attitude you should have.' It seems ludicrously specific. When I read this for the first time, I found it both hilarious and slightly appalling (hence intriguing) – surely advertising and magazine photography has for some time now been selling attitude more than clothes or products in the mechanics of the imagery: how to stand, how to sit, how to laugh, how to pout...With A&F, their marketing staff has finally spelled out what you should think while you wear the clothes.

It may seem a great leap from looking at instructions such as the 'please dispose of properly' illustration on the gum wrapper to seeing a catalogue as a set of instructions telling the viewer how to look and think. It is hard to view instructions for how to set up my computer – a very practical set of illustrations and text which tells me what to plug in where – in the same context as issues of *Wallpaper** and A&F Quarterly. Yet, when examined purely on a formal level addressing issues of abstraction, specificity, idealization, detail, and secondary messages, I can see how these different types of instruction have complex similarities. Instructions act as visual guides leading you through new experiences, sometimes providing the correct and only procedure, other times showing one way out of a possible; anything that might be considered a new experience is open for instruction, from technical processes to social interactions and lifestyle. While our daily life is constantly being shaped and influenced through designed ephemera – in little box top instructions, magazine pictures, movies and television – these are just suggested solutions, actions, attitudes, or ways of being. An instruction can be seen as merely the potential for some action to take place and every individual's interpretation of a two dimensional instruction will be unique to that person. Designers of instructions merely set up the framework for a future action.

My work can be divided into three different approaches for exploring instructions: as prescription, as narrative and as a process. Throughout all I have applied the look and 'feel' of instructions – diagraming, detailing, explaining, and using a straightforward approach. Yet, in many projects, my design becomes purely the aesthetic of information design as the forced simplicity or rigidity betrays some underlying complexity that defies instruction.

In the section 'instruction as prescription,' I question several aspects of my mediated life. I explore different ways that style and attitude can be instructed. With the projects in 'instruction as narrative,' I play with the way that pictographic instructions create narratives; how the interpretation of these narratives is in the hands of the reader and how instructional drawings can be lifted out of their intended context and recombined to make new narratives. Finally, in the projects in 'instruction as process,' I use the aesthetic and nature of the instructions I have looked at and apply them to other design problems.

Sarah
My thesis was in some ways how to make a thesis, similar to what it sounds like yours is. That said, I think the work I was gravitating towards in the thesis was very pertinent to what we do today. I mean, it was on instructions and all that stuff, and that's very much like the infographics we do.

Alicia
It's interesting though when you ask this question of us in particular, because both Sarah and myself are now partners of MGMT, but during thesis time and through school, Sarah and I had a lot of overlap in our areas of interest. And you know how it is there—you have to carve out your little area, so we worked hard to try and define it between us. Then happily after school we could collaborate, and share our joint love of things like instruction or information design. So in way, picking our theses separately and then asking us jointly how they affect us, it's kind of a nice next stage to that story.

For me personally, I had a writing background, so I really loved writing the text. That, for me, helped me exercise and develop ideas that I was less fluent in working through visually. Just that act of curating stuff, looking for a theme, and trying to write about it—that back and forth. I think that process is useful; I agree with Sarah that the statement itself isn't words to live by necessarily, but they still hold true for both of us and now we can say they compliment each other.

Grace
Did you start your practice together right when you graduated?

Sarah
No, it was three years or so.

Alicia
It was funny because John Gambell would always say, "Well, if you guys ever start a studio together…" I mean, he was just making a joke about it, and we were all too stressed out to even know what he was saying,

but… After school, we all worked in different places. Ariel [Apte Carter, founding partner] went to Doyle Partners, Sarah went to 2x4, and I went to Cooper Hewitt Museum. Anyway, we just missed each other, so we picked up various freelance projects so we could collaborate, and then it was a convergence of the coincidental. Ariel was freelancing full-time, and I was in-between, so we started something bigger, and then we roped Sarah in from 2x4. You know, you never think, "Now we're starting a studio and here's our phone number," but we just started with clients we gathered together from our various jobs, and it had its own life, and now we're still here.

Grace

What would you say to students who are just starting to think of what their thesis might be? If you could describe to them what a good goal for a thesis is, or what's something you should be aiming to get out of it? Or is there no way to guide it?

Sarah

I think it's just so daunting when you're faced with the thesis, but my advice would be just to keep things small, and that actual projects and tasks you set up for yourself should be really rigorously contained. Because it's actually in the making of that simple task that the bigger picture extends out. And you don't always see that when you're there.

Alicia

I think it also speaks about that translation from thinking to making. You can dwell on that big picture, that "one word thesis," you can stay in that miasma of big thinking and not be doing anything since you don't know exactly what you're doing. So just to get through that, keep making. Do little exercises, make the stakes low so you don't feel like you're going to fail. Try to stay focused, not necessarily on the thesis concept, but just realize that there's different ways to get to it if you're feeling stuck.

Barbara [Glauber] was the one who helped me with many of my roadblocks by saying, you know, "Focus on

the folio" or other small things, so then you feel like, "Ok, it's just a folio!" and it just moves you forward. And I don't want to portray us as total nut jobs when we were in school but—

Grace
Well, I think everyone sort of is. The work here is so self-initiated—

Alicia
Yeah, there are no parameters. So it's freeing for certain people, and then completely intimidating for others.

Grace
So was Barbara your thesis advisor?

Alicia
Yeah, she didn't have a thesis group, she was my thesis advisor. Because you had your group, and then you had, like, 2 others.

Grace
Now we just have a thesis group, and no outsider reader besides the editor.

Alicia
I think that's kind of a shame, actually. It was helpful because you could have cross-pollination, interdisciplinary conversations, but I can also see to some degree that it got to be a lot of voices. That was a big challenge for me; the voices weren't necessarily contradicting, but it's just a lot of input and you're already so stressed out about what your voice is, it can be obscured.

I also really drew a lot of strength and support from my group, and really got helpful feedback from my peers, as much as from an advisor… Do you have any other questions for us?

Grace
I think that's it; even the affirmation that the thesis is in some way still relevant is really the point.

Alicia

Yeah, maybe we should wrap it up with the topic sentence of just: no one knows what they're doing. A lot of it is just this mental gamesmanship of trying to stay focused, trying not to get overly stressed out by outside influences, and then just trying to listen and work through, and figure out ways you can still keep doing something, and not be too daunted by the bigger picture.

Yoonjai Choi

(Re)Assembly

Yoonjai Choi

STATEMENT

Preface

My childhood and adolescence is significantly divided into two parts; the periods I spent growing up in Seoul and in the suburbs of London. I was born in Seoul, a metropolis of mammoth scale and ultra-fast pace. As the nation's capital, it accommodates a quarter of the entire population, and its ever-expanding and ever-changing status is characterised by the confused and nebulous nature of the city and its people. Convenience and accessibility are taken for granted in Seoul; cabs can be hailed on every street corner and all manner of consumables may be delivered to your door. The 'faster, harder' type of Korean work ethic makes many impossibilities possible. After all, the nation managed to rebuild itself into a global economic force in the span of only a couple of decades after the post-war devastation. When I was nine, my family moved to England and I spent the most influential and formative years of my youth in a far less chaotic and adequately affluent area in the southern part of the Greater London. In the historic town of Kingston, traditional fishmongers and the Bentalls Centre (the closest British reincarnation of the American idea of the 'mall') stand side by side yet everything existed in harmony and nothing ever really seemed to change. Even through the eyes of a nine year-old who had barely learnt to spell her name with Roman alphabets, the British seemed to have everything so easy. Their colonialist history provided them with stable economic and cultural foundation. Every shop was closed by five in the afternoon and everyone had gardens to attend to.

Perhaps this brutal dichotomy between my personal history and cultural confusion provided me with the unique means to separate or integrate elements of life that are usually more readily accepted as a whole. As if my brain were a fragmented hard drive that retrieves the appropriate data by a set of commands, I acquired a skill that allowed me to keep the different parts of my ideas, views, and attitudes partitioned in my attempt to adapt and belong.

Scale: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: BOOK
Page 001

GENERAL STATEMENT | DESIGN STATEMENT | EXAMPLE | RELATED WORK

Yoonjai Choi
STATEMENT



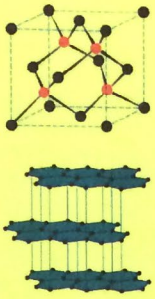
Simplest ABC

The Idea

The natural world is made up of 92 naturally-occuring elements. By definition, an element is 'a chemical substance that cannot be divided or changed into other chemical substances by any ordinary chemical technique', and every single creature, every object, every plant, every breathing cell is an assembly of these 92 elements. If you were to zoom very closely into sub-molecular level, you would find that at the very core, the question of substance becomes immaterial. It is structure — how the elements are put together — that truly determines the nature of all existing things.

Every designer reassembles. Traditionally, designers have been closer to content curators than content makers, which implies that our job inherently requires us to edit and impose hierarchy in order to represent information in its most efficient and creative form.

Both graphite and diamond are made up of carbon but the atomic stuctures of the two substances distinguish the nature of each.



Sorting and Rearranging

The term 'reassembly' implies that the object in question has first been disassembled. Disassembling is the dissection and the categorisation of content, not unlike sorting your record collection according to genre or dividing the contents of a bag of M&Ms by colour and arranging them into columns.

When jigsaw puzzle enthusiasts begin their process of assembling a puzzle, the first rule is to sort the pieces into six piles according to size and colour. This way, one keeps the pieces organised and is able to reach completion most effectively.

American artist Mark Dion's work is based on the idea of collecting and sorting. The artist's only subjective intervention is the manner in which he curates the archeological artifacts; in loosely systematic groups using drawers, cupboards, and curiosity cabinets.



p.78 Catalogue of Forms



Category: BOOK
Articles: TITLE
Scale: ---

Yoonjai Choi
STATEMENT

The Power of a Collection: Highlighting Similarities and Differences

A collection of units can create something more powerful and meaningful than the singular units.

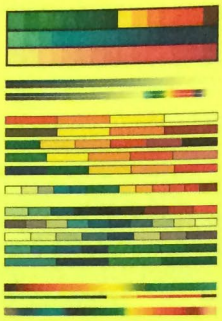
In the introduction to the book 'A Critical (Ninth) Assembly' — a collection of contributions from various artists, writers, musicians and critics compiled in black and white letter-size sheets — Editor Richard Kostelanetz writes; 'A critical collection is meant to realize more than the sum of parts and exemplify professional excellence.'

In graphic design, as in any creative discipline, 1+1=2 becomes a redundant equation. The outcome should always be greater than 2.

Dutch photographer Ari Versluis' pseudo-scientific and anthropological record of individuals' attempting to distinguish themselves from others by assuming a group identity is a sharp and humorous commentary on the contradictions surrounding the ideals of individuality and uniformity. The portraits of his subjects are displayed like biology specimens as part of a mosaic that illustrates the collective identity and style. This series, titled 'Exactitudes' (contraction of exact and attitude), explores collecting and comparing as a method that highlights differences and similarities.



p.78 Sex/Sex



p.78 Spectrum of Spectrums

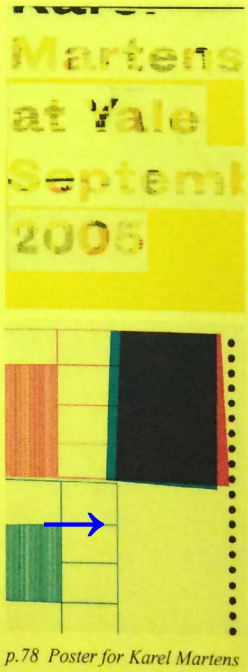
Regrading and Disregarding Systems and Rules

"Actors need bricks to play with. In fact, we reject all the improvised fragments we make without a plan. Improvisation without a plan is like tennis without tennis balls."
Lars Von Trier,
Film Director

In the 70s, artists began to find ways to implement systems and rules in their work. Systems and rules are the hallmark of every modernising period; they would stand as an alternative to intuition and ideally remove the possibility of interpretation. However, structure in any form of art is only pseudo-rational; it is internally logical and coherent but is essentially arbitrary.

Graphic designers may look to the likes of Josef Muller-Brockmann and Bringhurst for clues on the ideal grid or the perfectly balanced page. All designers refer back for precedence and guidelines, and work within a set of rules and restrictions, whether they are formal, structural or time-based. Karel Martens once told me that "Rules gave him freedom but beautiful things happen when they are out of your control." I also remember David Reinfurt warning me to be "open to accidents, but don't fetishize them. Sometimes the things that go right almost as if by accident are the very best, and not too clever." I subscribe to this belief that to be truly creative,

American musician John Cage describes the 'aleatoric process' as 'such processes which have been fixed in their outline but the details of which are left to chance.' This implies the integration of structure and randomness allowing for controlled but unanticipated outcome, creating unique and discordant sounds. Likewise, the more contemporary Brian Eno creates the sonic equivalent of a moiré pattern, produced by a set of rules that realise automated music. Further back in history, Baroque composers have adhered to a more strict set of rules governing chord progression and intervals. Music was constructed to be symmetric and harmonious.

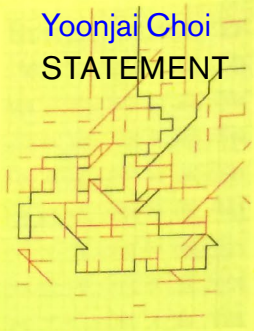


p.78 Poster for Karel Martens

Scale: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: BOOK

a designer must limit himself with restriction and also equip himself with a means to let go. Improvisation and chance operation is only valid if the process is rigorous and yields interesting outcomes. Designers need to be rule-makers and rule-breakers, but always with the willingness to claim authorship and, therefore, responsibility.

Yoonjai Choi
STATEMENT



p.78 Flow Poster

How is it Relevant?

In the modern age, and in conjunction with the development of digital media, everything becomes more complex. Advances in communication and technology offer the prospect of ordering information in increasing detail, designers are expected to deal with more complex and multilayered information, and to exercise management and control of organisations.

If the diluted principles of modernism and the 'International Style' is now only relevant in its formal language, and if everything is pastiche, then to what absolutes do designers answer besides self-imposed rules and restrictions and the nature of the given content? Although every period has an aesthetic and an ideology of its time, the 21st Century provides us with not much more than an ambivalent set of guidelines and lessons learnt through a reflection of the past which tell us that in fact, there is no right way to do (or design) anything. It is not a matter of 'right,' but only a matter of 'right now'.

Disassembling and reassembling is not an original concept as a methodology; it is merely one that I am interested in and find myself practicing repeatedly.

It is also the core idea that runs through the work shown in this book, as well as through the book itself.

Scale: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: BOOK
01

(Re)Assembling : With or Without a Blueprint

Yoonjai Choi
STATEMENT

Introduction

As a group, graphic designers, more often than not, are people with anal retentive tendencies. /01/ We like to organise our files a certain way, we colour code little post-it notes, we worship the grid, /02/ and if not, we feel as though we should. Graphic designers are control freaks. Some more than others, and all in different ways, but explicit or closet, obstinacy is a part of our everyday practice and most of us are rule makers in the broadest sense. I, myself, am probably more guilty than many in this room.

Constraints and freedom are the axis of all aesthetic practice. However, creativity happens when the authority of a system is undermined. Paul Klee claims that "Genius is the error of the system." Can the construction of design be systematic yet open, structured yet unpredictable, rational and yet personal? My thesis is about trying to answer some of these questions; making work with the right amount of control and learning to allow events to unfold.

(Re)Assembly: In Work

Last year, /03/ I was experimenting with the idea of breaking down a whole into simpler units /04/ and then recombining them /05/ to build or reveal something new. I was playing graphic design ping pong /06/ between the two diametric notions of fragmentation and integration, with the aim of hitting a different surface every time. /07//08//09/ I must admit, that I am in my element when I am collecting, sorting and organizing with my implicit autism on full display. /10/ But the critical act of dissecting, deconstructing and distilling /11/ can be an extremely formulaic process where you are most likely to end up with neat piles. /12/ The real fun begins when reassembly happens; there is room for /13/ interpretation and improvisation, and sometimes an added bonus of surprise. /14/

Distance: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: POSTER
Page 077

Yoonjai Choi
STATEMENT

(Re)Assembly: In Definition

But what is assembling or reassembling? There are so many ways in which one can 'assemble'. The distinction between the various types of assembly is determined by not only the outcome, but the method in which the units are put together.

For example; /15/ Is there a system? /16/ Or isn't there? /17/ Is the outcome determined by mathematic structure or probabilities? /18/ Or by an aleatoric composition or chance operation? Or (the simple will and) the arbitrary decision made by the artist? /19/ Of course nothing falls neatly into any category and there are overlaps, and in this abstract spectrum of overlaps is where I hope to situate my work.

(Re)Assembly: In the World

Examples of assembly or reassembly are found in all genres of the creative endeavor; from fine art to graphic design to music to fashion to our everyday lives.

/20/ Ikea furniture is a classic example of assembling with strict instructions. You have the exact number of parts that play very specific roles. There is only one possible outcome; you either get it right or you get it wrong. There is no room for interpretation or creativity. Success may only be achieved by faithfully adhering to the instructions provided.

/21/ LEGOs, on the other hand, operate within a more flexible system. Each piece is a modular unit that fits onto another. But in this case, there are limitless possible outcomes. The validity of this system is not in replication but in creation and re-creation. A set of guidelines encourage the user to be most creative within a structure – and each person will approach them with individual objectives.

/22/ The dada artist Kurt Schwitters' collage and assemblage works, better known as 'Merz', are fundamentally an act of reassembly that utilise

Distance: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: POSTER
Page 077

Yoonjai Choi
STATEMENT

existing pieces of graphics found in the world, compiled through a subjective editing process. The particles are still alive and recognizable in the art. But when removed from their original conditions, the pieces then communicate a different meaning within a newly fabricated context. No rules are apparent here, only choices.

/23/ Similarly, the fashion label 'Imitation of Christ', reassembles and metamorphosizes second-hand clothing into modern and whimsical fashion items with the aim of 'transforming undesirables into desirables'.

/24/ A sonic equivalent might be the sounds of Akufen. /AUDIO CLIP/ With a little more underlying structure than a typical collage, tiny fragments of guitar sounds, pop songs, classical music, tango beats, and random radio signals are sampled and overlaid onto a massive, upbeat loop that glues everything together. Created from fragments of collected sounds, the pieces are playfully woven together into a tight fabric with an array of assorted textures.

/25/ Assembly is often preceded by collecting and sorting. American artist Mark Dion practices this method in a less arbitrary manner, through a pseudo-scientific/archeological precedure. He classifies and organises the artifacts that were excavated during the Thames Dig into loosely systematic categories. This assembly of objects, ranging from plastic bottle caps to cattle teeth, documents London's cultural and industrial history.

/26/ The strict organisation method is the foundation in Dieter Roth's work, where he assembles an archive of flat waste in plastic sleeves, then in binders, then in racks. If the library could be seen as an archival assembly of information, this example is an act of quantitative collection, a chronological archive of the banal.

Distance: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: POSTER
Page 077

Yoonjai Choi
STATEMENT

/27/ All map-making is a form of reassembly in various degrees. Information is removed in layers and reassembled in a way which adequately amplifies a selected set of data in the most effective mode. We are all too familiar with the significance of Harry Beck's triumph with the London Underground map where he deconstructs the existing, more geographically accurate map and reassembles the pieces using a strict set of self-generated formal rules.

/28/ In contrast, Nina Katchadourian's piece 'Austria' is a dissected road map reassembled to form the shape of a heart in reference to the country's nickname 'Heart of Europe' in a more haphazard fashion.

(Re)Assembly: Indefinitely

If 'reassembling' is my method of working, then the degrees in which the system – in other words a set of rules – are applied, or the fidelity with which instructions are observed is more about how I conduct this process. I am a rule-maker. And I enjoy having control as much as the next graphic designer. But at the same time, designers are constantly making arbitrary choices. Instictive and intuitive decision making is what distinguishes a good designer from a well-trained one.

In my future work, I am aspiring to go further with the idea of reassembly and explore areas I have not before – pushing the boundaries of my own limitations and finding some sort of liberation through a new method of working. Exploring open systems and retaining rigor rather than rigidity is my intent for this year, and onwards.

Distance: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: POSTER
Page 077

Do you feel that your thesis informs your work today?

Yes. If not the thesis specifically, my time at Yale has undoubtedly informed how I think about and practice design, everyday.

Yoonjai Choi
RESPONSE

Did it inform your first job out of school? Do you feel as though it's more relevant now than it was when you graduated, or vice versa?

My first job out of school was at 2x4, a studio co-founded my Michael Rock (with partners Susan Sellers and Georgie Stout). My understanding is that Michael helped shape the pedagogical direction of the program significantly, so in some ways, my time at 2x4 felt very much like an extension of my education.

When you've completed your thesis and time has passed, your arguments and references can certainly seem incomplete or naive in retrospect (probably because they were incomplete and naive). But I think the practice of self-questioning and adhering to certain criteria by which you measure the value or success of your work are ideas that feels more relevant now than ever.

If you could go back and adjust your thesis, would you? How so?

I wouldn't (or couldn't) change it. Working on my thesis was incredibly important to me, but I think it's also important to realise that your MFA thesis is a moment in time, a distillation of what you were thinking about as a designer in a very specific context. It is neither absolute nor timeless.

Is there a part that still sticks with you, and other parts that seem irrelevant now? Which parts?

Looking back, some of the references seem less relevant to me now. Surprising even. The Yale thesis (at least during my time there) was differentiated from that of comparable programs because the focus was on the visual method, instead of the visual subject. It was about learning through doing, rather than learning through learning, which can never be irrelevant.

Neil Donnelly

I am interested in the possibilities of structure and logic as frameworks for creating graphic design, but also in how I can disturb these frameworks and intervene within. Establishing constraints is one a way of creating order, but it also provides something to push against, an opportunity for friction to exist within a system without breaking it. Confronting multiple structures can lead to intriguing misalignments, moments that seems to be a result of some logic, but are, in fact, the product of the dissonance between them. In addition to combining different forms of order, the relationship of whim and arbitrariness to structure is a potentially fruitful one, a push-and-pull between logic and its opposites. Pragmatism is an important aspect of my work, too, in that I'm interested in turning restrictions and constraints—the realities of any given project—to my advantage, looking for opportunities within them to flip hierarchies or subvert expectations.

Neil Donnelly
STATEMENT

NOT about theory/abstraction, about my work
"Idea I'm exploring through my work is..."
Don't have to mention the words, but identify what's in it
I'm looking to challenge ~~the~~ ~~bree~~ while working within constraints
Could take it out of world of struggle and into the world of the dialectical
Synthesis →
(my process is)

Client/other
~~Use~~ can facilitate, not
just push away

Captions → can have bigger role, more of an event
(subtle of thesis)
Give captions to
someone else, ask
them for something
in return!

Project that
progresses in
silence/breaks
into a structure?

constraints
Something constant?
2 seconds always comes
from/is dictated by someone else?

Desktop image:
something nice here

Modernism in graphic design provided new methods of organization and logical frameworks for arranging content, and established the fundamentals of the field as it's practiced today. To quote Josef Müller-Brockmann from his touchstone Grid Systems in Graphic Design, "the designer's work should have the clearly intelligible, objective, functional and aesthetic quality of mathematical thinking." But the profession has experienced a reaction against this in the late 1980s and early 1990s that promoted wild, often illegible forms (post-modernism), and a reaction against that a decade or so later, a return to the clean lines and rigid grids of a universalist era (neo-modernism).

JOSEF MÜLLER-BROCKMANN. GRID SYSTEMS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN. NIEDERTEUFEN, SWITZERLAND: A. NIGGLI, 1981. 10.

Neil Donnelly
STATEMENT

Graphic design today exists at a point where there isn't really a dominant stream or school of thought, no dialectical relationship between opposing camps. As curator and publisher Lionel Bovier puts it in The Most Beautiful Swiss Books 2007, "more and more designers [have] adopted a site-specific type of eclecticism... they now seem to be much more interested in switching between different visual languages." It's now possible to combine disparate influences (a modernist approach to the grid, say, with "ugly" vernacular letterforms) without risking an argument. Of course, individual approaches and attitudes aren't free from dogma, but no single doctrine dominates the discussion. And when there's no one voice of authority imposing its will, there's also not likely to be a revolt, and no revolutionaries to become the new "old guard." Now, it seems more compelling and fruitful to synthesize disparate approaches and influences than to position oneself steadfastly on either side of any conflict.

LAURENZ BRUNNER & TAN WÄLCHLI. "NEO-PRE-MODERN?!: IN CONVERSATION WITH THE JURY, BERNE, FEBRUARY 2008." THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SWISS BOOKS 2007. BERNE: BUNDESAMT FÜR KULTUR, 2008. 41.

I tend to lean heavily on logic in my work. But, at the risk of stating the obvious, I've come to realize that there is no design that derives purely rationally from either its content or any kind of system without being touched by the subjectivity of its maker; intuitive decisions and personal taste (to say nothing of the corresponding impossibility of one correct answer) are powerful forces that make any objective delivery of information not only impossible but undesirable. Morse Peckham, in Man's Rage for Chaos, addresses this dissonance between subjective and objective impulses: "a primary drive of human beings is towards order.... I am convinced that to every situation a human being brings an orientation which is not derived from that situation but already exists in his perceptual powers before he comes to that situation.... The very drive to order which qualifies man to deal successfully with his environment disqualifies him when it is to his interest to correct his orientation." Any absolute notion of order is corrupted (or maybe enriched) by our own subjectivity. One can attempt to control and to order, but germinating and encouraging disorder within order can be productive and rewarding. The relationship of whim and arbitrariness to structure is a potentially fruitful one, a push-and-pull between logic and its contraries.

MORSE PECKHAM. MAN'S RAGE FOR CHAOS: BIOLOGY, BEHAVIOR, AND THE ARTS. NEW YORK: SCHOCKEN BOOKS, 1973. XI.

Through my work, I try to synthesize opposites, not so much juxtaposing dichotomies as introducing more subtle interferences within structures, sometimes to highlight temporality or ephemerality, or more generally to call the conventions of graphic design into question. I am interested in the possibilities of structure and logic, in using frameworks and systems for creating graphic design, but also in finding ways

to disturb these frameworks and intervene in them. Purely "generative" design leaves little room for individual expression or point of view, and the slippery notion of any kind of definite order calls an entirely systems-based approach into question: to quote Michel Foucault from The Order of Things, "a thing can be absolute according to one relation yet relative according to others... the same thing may be placed at differing points in our order." Taking stock of the flexibility of order, logics can be devised that either allow dynamism to exist within them, or deliberately result in misalignment or disturbance. Combining multiple structures can lead to intriguing moments that appear to be a result of some logic, but are, in fact, the product of the dissonance between them.

MICHEL FOUCAULT. THE ORDER OF THINGS. NEW YORK: PANTHEON, 1971. 54.

Neil Donnelly
STATEMENT

A practice that allows for the malleability of structures and logic is one that relies on pragmatism as an approach. I'm interested in taking advantage of restrictions and constraints, looking for opportunities within them to flip hierarchies, to emphasize glitches within the system, and to subtly subvert expectations. Establishing and working within limitations is one way of creating order, but they also provide something to push against, an opportunity for friction to exist within a system without breaking it. Constraints and compromise are not purely a cause of friction, though—they can also facilitate and open opportunities where they wouldn't have otherwise existed.

The very notion of a thesis is a drive toward order; again, to quote Peckham, the use of "pre-existent patterns in the mind to organize perceptual experience." The notion of chaos or disorder when it comes to

MORSE PECKHAM. MAN'S RAGE FOR CHAOS: BIOLOGY, BEHAVIOR, AND THE ARTS. NEW YORK: SCHOCKEN BOOKS, 1973. 33.

design can never truly exist, as we're constantly organizing, making sense, categorizing, even when the visual effect we're after is one of disorder.

This book aims to present my work in a way that complicates a clean, organized understanding of the products, placing them alongside evidence of the messy reality from which they came, a kind of ordered disorder. My hope is that this book conveys a more complete chronicle of my work at Yale than could be revealed by the finished projects alone.

My interest in investigating the relationship between order and disorder isn't rooted in nostalgia for modernism, but rather in reconciling my inclination toward logic with the spontaneous, messy, complex world my work must engage. By acknowledging and embracing the role of order in my work, and attempting to pragmatically introduce disturbance and variation within its boundaries, I hope to inspire the viewer to look closer, to discern the structure within the work, to discover some insight into my approach, and to make personal connections to it.

Do you feel that your thesis informs your work today?

Yes, absolutely. Rather than acting as a way of generating work, my thesis was more productive as a way of analyzing my work, helping me to establish common threads and defining my point of view. This push and pull between logic/structure and dissonance/disorder is something that I'm still constantly feeling in my work, and I think that's because I used the thesis as a way of gaining insight into my tendencies and ways of working, rather than as a kind of thematic productive mechanism.

Did it inform your first job out of school? Do you feel as though it's more relevant now than it was when you graduated, or vice versa?

Particularly since my first job after Yale was working on my own, yes, definitely. I'm not sure if it's more relevant now, especially because in that last semester of school it was pretty all-consuming. And then a month after graduating I wondered, "Why was I so stressed out about that?" But in terms of its relevance as a way of describing and assessing my work, I think it's at least as relevant now as it was then.

If you could go back and adjust your thesis, would you? How so?

I don't think I would. Not by any means because it's a perfect document, but I think it's an accurate reflection of my work and thinking at the time. It still has a lot of relevance for me, and while I wouldn't do it all exactly the same way now, that doesn't seem like the point.

Is there a part that still sticks with you, and other parts that seem irrelevant now? Which parts?

The most important part for me was that the thesis serve as a distillation not just of my work at Yale, but of the experience as a whole. It was such an intense, productive, and rewarding two years, and I wanted to make a book that, almost more than anything else, could help me to remember the details of the experience that might fade with time. The memories in the book are selective, of course, but the narratives and the residue of the process that frame the work are still remarkably effective at throwing me back into the Atrium.

⌂ →

Sebastian Campos,
Mike Gallagher,
Rebecca Gimenez, and
Andrew Shurtz

Notes to self

words and images
october 2006

a muddle. regardless i thought the text should be included because it reflects how i felt about my thoughts at the time. a set of disconnected thoughts that edge on being incomprehensible. these pictures and these words also begin to define a territory. a few ideas hiding underneath the verbiage, struggling to come out. it was a useful exercise ...

Sebastian Campos
STATEMENT

Notes to others

Sebastian Campos
STATEMENT

I guess wanting to work in this way comes from an attempt to avoid illustration, to avoid turning the world into images. I mean, why "comment" on the workings of our culture? Why leave your own procedures untouched when you make images about the world? A revolutionary image can always be made in a very conservative way. I think that by locating your practice in the "assembly line" of design you can begin to see how these relationships play out in different spheres.

Using process to create a "buffer" between you and the things you make allows you in a sense to avoid responsibility for the objects you bring into the world. Though a certain amount of responsibility is unavoidable. The thing exists, and you were involved in its making, so you can't suspend the object completely. What I try to do is to defer it, put it aside for a while. Maybe by doing that you can convince people that a different kind of object is possible.

When I come to a project, I try to direct the thinking toward the situation that is being addressed: get everyone involved in thinking about the context of this thing, about the way in which it will enter the world. When you keep the object at the center of the discussion, it inevitably becomes a matter of "fitting" this new context into a type. Everyone has an idea about how a billboard, a poster, a book, etc look like. It's like when you take your first life drawing classes, and they make you draw these familiar objects upside down, to make you stop drawing the idea of the object you have in your head and start drawing what you see.

The connection between how an object appears to us and what it does can be completely arbitrary. Sometimes you even begin to ask yourself whether the real role of design in our culture is not to look for new, more meaningful connections between production and consumption -- aesthetics and use -- but to legitimize them. You need ways to break the spell of design. The aesthetic of re-use I referred to earlier may give you a sense of how much this is so. It is common to think that discrete objects fit particular purposes. When a new need arises -- drinking coffee in your car because you're late for work -- a new object will be made that fits it -- a cup holder. But sometimes, when you can't find what you need, or when it is simply not available, you have to discover the affordances of what you have. The vernacular of use is not necessarily friendly + poetic. These new uses arise out of conflict, of need.

Sebastian Campos
STATEMENT



During early stages of the design process, when you're trying to get you bearings, this is the place where everyone has to verbalize whatever "object language" they speak. When you talk about a the design of a bed with some friends in New York, everybody will immediately begin to think about a rather large heavy object that occupies a fixed position in the center of a room ... if, on the other hand, you are with some friends in tokyo this will be a light, movable object that will be put away during the day while the room is used for something else. In the japanese version of the bed you might want to consider the necessary storage and the floor covering as much a part of the bed "idea", as you would a bedhead in the New York version. These beds are not about a universal, biological behaviour called "sleeping" -- they're about the ideas about sleeping that each culture holds.

To locate the ideas that make sense of an object, the language of objects has to intersect language. I'm interested in the way people describe the objects they have in mind: all the assumptions become really evident. Working in a group does help. Because the connection between the object/artifact and the conversation that made it possible is far more determined than the relationship between what the object does and the way it looks. The dynamics of this conversation, when you're working with another designer for example, take over the decision process. The object "makes sense" within this conversation. Sometimes the end product bears no resemblance to what was in everyone's mind at the start. Some designers, like Lacaton + Vasall, the architects of the Palais du Tokyo in Paris, go as far as replacing drawing by conversation. They started working this way in Casablanca with their mentor, Jacques Hondelatte. He insisted that no drawing should take place until everyone involved had a clear picture in their heads. "There was no drawing ... It was like a miracle when the project appeared. He said that the project is most beautiful when it is in your head."

I do not necessarily think that "the project is most beautiful when it is in your head", but I do think that it is certainly more fluid. Objects do have a role in this context: working in a series, looking at models, mockups, materials can articulate the dynamics of the process, but the process, the conversation itself does remain at the center.

Sebastian Campos
STATEMENT

I'll repeat myself here but I think this is important. I have no desire to state that this model only works through establishing a harmonious, cooperative context. The agency of each party involved is important, almost vital. Violent disagreements are very useful things: they establish boundaries, open new avenues. I like to work with others because it stops me from relying on my own set of visual fetishes. They never disappear completely of course, but their validity becomes a little bit more relative. If you somehow engage the procedure itself a different kind of object can emerge, which in turn will make another cycle of conversations possible. But the conversation does find or suggest form: it's not essential that nothing be produced as it is not essential that something be produced. I guess what matters is to acknowledge that design as such is not confined to the artifact, but that it extends into these microsocial/micropolitical contexts, and that these are as important to the work as any physical manifestation.

It is also important to understand that these "others" of the object also possess their own formal and structural qualities + requirements. I believe that once you acknowledge these things as an intentional part of the process, they become almost automatic ... but then you have to establish some distance again, and examine what you're doing a bit more carefully. It is more interesting for someone to partake instead of simply react: they become invested in the output in a different way.

Perhaps the fact that we (designers) produce "everyday objects" is what drives me to think about a practice in this way. Looking at some recent work by Will Holder, I realized it could be read in terms of what Simon Reynolds and Mark K-Punk have termed a (hauntological(sensibility at the edges of our culture. An obsession with ghosts and a re-visitation of the past which is not nostalgic but somewhat disruptive (they suggest British label Ghost Box as an example of this). I thought one could use this filter to perform a productive reading of Will's recent work. In the past few years he has been engaged in some sort of science fiction archeology, producing artifacts that seem to hail us from an alternate, indefinite past. The objects are heavily referential, but not overt; radically undefined; out of of focus, like a collection of echoes and traces, peripheral visions. Ghosts of futures passed.

Sebastian Campos
STATEMENT

Will's work seems to come from a different kind of conversation: about everyday objects and about the kind of everyday that the objects suggest. This made me think about Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby's "Design Noir" which I had read a few times, but it was only now that some of their ideas had become somewhat clearer to me. In a way Will's work was an example of what they called "value fictions" where the technologies remain the same but the societal values change; the opposite of "science fiction" where the society remains the same but the technology changes. Where I disagree with their assessment of science fiction -- writers like William Gibson and Bruce Sterling have been producing some of the most interesting "value fictions" of the past 20 years, I believe that their ideas point out the way towards a radically different understanding of the role design can play as a critical tool to engage the world.

I'm attracted to the dissonant familiarity that these objects can produce. How they create a space to think about the role objects can play in our lives. It's like two worlds collide, and fragments (newspapers, books, furniture, packaging) turn up everywhere, and they make you wonder about what kind of conversation brought them into being. This is also related to this idea of design as "science fiction" that Dan Michaelson talked about in his lecture last year: how these things that we make, by virtue of their insertion in an everyday context, can give us clues about how a different kind of everyday might look like. I don't really know where this goes yet. Maybe the pieces don't completely fit, maybe they just butt against each other. but that's good too. I'm not trying to resolve this. I'm just trying to figure out what drives me to do it, and in the meantime that's enough to keep going. All I wanted before I came here was a new to-do list.

Sebastian Campos
STATEMENT

(1)The world is a mess! And yet somehow we manage to cull some sort of order from it. (2)This order we create is often a sort of composite, bound together pieces of this and that. It is typically ambiguous and flawed, but often remains stable, if only for fleeting moments.

(3)My introduction to graphic design came during a time when I was subsumed in a culture of electronic music. All the music I owned was in the form of mixtapes. I never possesed any of the original material, only the recombined output. (4)The mix, the interstitial space between two or more songs forms the crux of the art-form related to that culture. Where things fuse for a brief moment of time is where I found the foundation for how I think about graphic design.

Mike Gallagher
STATEMENT

(5)This mix space, being neither A nor B, and yet simultaneously both at the same time is something I learned from music. But it does translate into visual form all the time. It could be as simple as layering day onto night through the use of a camera and single piece of film. (6)The output is uncanny, yet somehow distinguishable as a made composite. This image never really happened, atleast not in the way that it is shown, it is an illusion.

(7)This however is not an illusion. Those are people wearing Nike's standing in a 16th century backdrop. What makes this an effective composite is the perceptual shift that occurs when you realize how disjointed the scene actually is, (8)making apparent the distance between what is seen and what is really going on. Often when this takes place in the world of graphic design the results come off as highly art-directed, (9)however sometimes this kind of thing materializes of it's own accord. And when the world just happens to provide this kind of mash-up, the results are subtly poignant.

(10)The perceptual shift from the seamless to the seamy is important. Work that is too perfectly smoothed over is somehow insidious. But guiding the viewer from a perception of perfect unity (11)to intense fragmentation can be a political statement. We are not all the same; only from a distance do things appear homogenous.

(12)This tactic can be also be applied in reverse. The functions of road, bike lane, and sidewalk can bleed into one another. People partaking of each are forced to interact in a more intimate way than is normally required. (13)They are brought together as active participants in the production of a new type of public space. The demarcation between what are usually understood as seperate functions has been disolved. (14)And perhaps this is also characteristic of the kind of world we live in: globalized; poly-cultural; multi-modal. Only when things are so potentially chaotic could putting 2 ton hunks of speeding metal in direct proximity to human beings be thought of as a way to make things safer. Oddly enough, it apparently works.

(15)Proximity can be a very strong tool when seeking to unite a disparate group. Sometimes just putting things next to each other is enough. (16)When dealing with a large and varied group, often what each individual has to say is less important than the conversation that emerges amongst them. This dialogue can be understood as a kind of glue that binds the group in a unique and productive way. This is as equally true for people as it is for books.

(17)Other times a single move, enacted from above, can be used to unify a diverse set of pieces. If that move is a direct outgrowth of how the parts function—(18)what they do, who they are, where they're from

and not force fed willy-nilly, an organic sense of unity can be established.

(19)Occasionally a more thorough approach to the mixing process is called for: one that plays off the differences inherent in the parts and makes them apparent. (20)Collage is an important technique because it represents the binary of the slick and overly smoothed over. By exposing all of the parts, it is somehow more honest, (21)yet that doesn't mean it can't be seamless. To be sure, all of the last four examples are designed strategies, but they examine the various extremes of how far a designer must push a collection before it gels into a cohesive whole.

(22)These strategies are partially a way to keep up, on the other hand they are a reflection of our time. We demand options. Options that let us pick and choose from a wide and diverse palette. (23)An alphabet, for instance, is already a diverse set of parts that could be said to stand in for cultural heterogeneity. (24)But if we build into that set a myriad of further options that can be recombined ad infitum, (25)perhaps we get closer to actually representing our current condition. In a way, this is a feedback loop that both produces and is produced by the cultural climate of any given age.

(26)In the hyper pace of our current world, things don't remain stable for very long. While change happens at an ever increasing rate, designers can engineer their work to adapt at an even faster pace. (27)One way to accomplish this is to allow for an active reorientation of the work, or build in a way that might anticipate future needs and desires. However no one ever said that this all needs to be done in a slavish and cynical fashion, (28)so perhaps engineering multiple modalities within a single whole in a jocuserious manner allows us to both adapt in time with culture and also comment upon it.

(29)Irony and wit can play a substantial role in defining the space between things. (30)Embodying a way forward that is optimisitic yet serious of intention, they provide a source of energy to continue engaging the world in the face of mounting overload. (31)Recombinant form is a way to deal with the overwhelming volume of information and source material at our disposal. Everywhere you look there are bits and pieces to draw upon as the foundations for work. And while most may seem unrelated, there are latent relationships simply waiting to be exposed. (32)Beginning to visualize the infinity of connections that pass through, around, and between us at every moment is a key factor in engaging with the world.

I was born in 1980; I grew up watching G.I Joe, the fall of the Berlin Wall, zillions of TV ads, Van Halen, M*A*S*H, and The Cosby Show. I was born with words in my mouth—"Band-Aid," "Q-tip," "Xerox," "Jello"—object-names as fixed and eternal in my logosphere as "taxicab" and "toothbrush." The world is a home littered with pop-culture products and their emblems. I also came of age swamped by parodies that stood for originals yet mysterious to me—I knew Monkees before Beatles, Belmondo before Bogart, and "remember" the movie Summer of '42 from a Mad magazine satire, though I've still never seen the film itself. I'm not alone in having been born backward into an incoherent realm of texts, products, and images, the commercial and cultural environment with which we've both supplemented and blotted out our natural world.(17) It is a daunting world where overload is the rule rather than the exception. How do you choose from all of this excess, and can you ever choose just one thing? There is always too much information available to us and out of this barrage comes a kind of remix culture.

Mike Gallagher
STATEMENT

So you're interested in the condition of being overwhelmed by options, coupled with a sort of collective ADD, and this remix culture, as you call it, is about trying to take hold of the chaos we experience everyday? I'm reminded of ideas about the act of collecting as a way to take hold of the world around us and make sense of it, along with arguments about the end of originality.

Of course, what exactly is originality anyway? Modernism, that great trumpeter of the artist genius, creating work in isolation with inspiration bestowed upon him from somewhere on high, is literally pervaded by examples of plagiarism, copying, theft, and appropriation. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos. Any artist knows these truths, no matter how deeply he or she submerges that knowing.(13)

I agree. The idea that total originality was possible seemed to go the way of the dodo with the coming of postmodernism. (What is postmodernism anyway, except perhaps modernism with the anxiety acknowledged, or even emphasized.)(28) Following this thought, it strikes me that collecting might be a useful strategy for grappling with how to design amongst this chaos.

No, it's not about collecting as an end in itself. I don't like to be a victim of my obsessions in that way. It's more about working with groups of things, their arrangements, how they react.(7) In the end the collection can be left behind, or more accurately, transformed. It never really goes away, not entirely, rather it becomes something altogether different where the parts still count for something but take a back seat to the new whole they are subsumed within.

Kind of like Hip-Hop. Or like DJ culture. I am loath to say it, but the music coming out of the Club and Rave scene of the late 80s and ~~early~~ 90s worked in a similar way. Actually, that is where I first became aware of this kind of practice, through the act of DJing, mixing to be specific.

I would go further and suggest that technologies developed in the last 30 years are what created this kind of process. The advent of the mixing board and sampler brought about an entirely new type of form making, which is less about the individual parts than the links that may be drawn between disparate sites and ideas. The sampler, a machine that reprocesses musical products, diminishes the dividing line between reception and practice, producing new cartographies

of knowledge. This recycling of sounds, images, and forms implies incessant navigation within the meanderings of cultural history, navigation which itself becomes the subject of artistic practice. Isn't art, as Duchamp once said, "a game among all men of all eras?"(24)

Technology certainly made this process easier, but it didn't create it. Electronic music and the sampler are two of the more significant recent manifestations of this, but there are plenty of other examples, some more recent and others much, much older. For instance literature has been in a plundered, fragmentary state for a long time. When I was thirteen I purchased an anthology of Beat writing. Immediately, and to my very great excitement, I discovered one William S. Burroughs, author of something called Naked Lunch, excerpted there in all its coruscating brilliance. Later, I discovered that Burroughs had incorporated snippets of other writers' texts into his work, an action I knew my teachers would have called plagiarism. This "cut-up method," as Burroughs called it, was central to whatever he thought he was doing, and he quite literally believed it to be akin to magic. Burroughs was interrogating the universe with scissors and a paste pot, and yet was no plagiarist at all.(14)

Mike Gallagher
STATEMENT

But I would argue that right now this kind of behavior has become so commonplace as to become the norm and has done so precisely because of advances in technology that make it so much easier to perform.

Which raises the question, why then would you need to partake as well? What can you tell us that we haven't heard before?(29)

My hope, one of them anyway, is that I can make work that shows us a way to live with these conditions. One example I've recently explored was how to get my fellow students engaged with, and interested in, the waste material they produce while working in the studio. Another, broader goal, has been an attempt to develop a visual vocabulary that grows directly from my daily life and is derived from these particular conditions, one that is specific to now. Often, when initially assessing a project, we search for a generative idea within the content that can drive the form. This thesis has been an attempt to step back, gain a broader view, and explore whether one facet of our shared culture can serve as a generative tool.

If you're literally re-using the materials around you in a socially minded way, you eliminate the production of new material. The physicality of what goes in is also what comes out, and this is an interesting strategy to me because it is incredibly economical and (in theory) produces no waste. On the other hand, if you're re-using forms rather than actual physical material (which I believe is far more common to your practice), then you are in fact producing more new 'stuff'. This seems like a paradox, deflating the very idea you claim to embrace.

Simply saying 'there's too much junk in the world so I'm going to give up design' is naive. If all production stops so does advancement of the culture, and I think we can agree that no one wants that. Further, I think there is plenty of room to maneuver in ways that interrogate the medium and expand our notions of what design may be. This follows from a belief that there is a marked difference between gross mass production and critical activity in the discipline. Critical design, or design that asks carefully crafted questions and makes us think, is just as difficult and just as important as design that solves problems or finds answers. Being challenging might seem like an obvious role

for art, but art is too far removed from the world of mass consumption to be effective in this regard, even though it is of course part of the consumerist culture. There is a place for a form of design that pushes the cultural and aesthetic potential of everyday objects to their limits. Questions must be asked about what we actually need, about the way poetic moments can be intertwined with the everyday and not separated from it. At the moment, this type of design is neglected and regarded as secondary. Today, design's main purpose is still to provide new products—smaller, faster, different, better.(27)

I wonder how you diverge from this dominant paradigm without essentially leaving graphic design behind for a kind of art practice? This idea about critical design seems interesting in the abstract, but is it feasible in actual practice while working for a client and using someone else's content?

Mike Gallagher
STATEMENT

First of all I should say that the fact that graphic design operates from deep within the world of mass consumption and capitalism is precisely what makes the discipline interesting and what, for me, gives it the incredible potential of inserting other voices and ideas into the dominant paradigm. Following this, allow me to be clearer about my goals. I'm interested in creating work that, through the juxtaposition and blending of multiple forms and/or structures (read: the remix process), offers a point of friction. Here I'm thinking about friction as a positive rather than negative attribute. The real gift of the best designers is to produce a kind of hesitation in the routines of contemporary life, an opening in which new potentials are offered, new patterns, rhythms, moods, pleasures, connections, and perceptions offered as a gift that may or may not be taken up.(21)

Let's say your work is going where you want it to. Is the end result then recognizable? How will viewers then know that what they are looking at is graphic design at all?

I'm not so concerned with this and in truth the output will not be so foreign in appearance. (Though perhaps it will be just foreign enough) There is a whole history of forms and structures being drawn upon. My work is situated in history quite consciously, so despite reorienting the goals and methods of production, the work takes on forms that are not uncommon. This kind of practice must exist in a kind of dialectical relationship with archetypal forms, in that it is ultimately about the reinterpretation of our everyday reality, tapping into ubiquitous sentiments and associations.(10) These structure and situate the work in a historical context, giving it precedent and a lineage.

Do you think this work will also get trapped in a cycle of planned obsolescence? Many promises are made that tell us that this next wave of creation will elevate us beyond ourselves, yet in the end it is always outstripped by the next, again new, wave of production. How do we respond to this situation? Do you know of a way out?

The first step is to reuse, reinvent, and re-see what is already there. We must come to terms with what we have already made and make it our own. Second, by realizing that the mechanisms by which we produce our world are essentially neutral, endlessly flexible and easy both to adopt and to adapt. We can use the computer to make anything we want, but we can also use the garbage dump, the discount clothing emporium and the hardware store to find bits and pieces out of which we can build our own reality. We can be the hunters and the gatherers of our own new nature.(8)

Buried in all this is what I think really lies at the heart of your inquiry, what your really interested in: expanding your formal arsenal, creating a larger toolbox to work from.

I will admit that this is part of my exploration, of course it is, how could it not be. I would not be able to achieve my goals without doing so. But it is certainly not the primary goal. The main focus is, and has always been, an interrogation of graphic design as a medium.

This is interesting, but a medium of what?

If design is not content itself, but rather a means of conveying something, then we must examine very closely how we are transmitting messages to each other. Graphic design then becomes very interesting and important as a medium or conduit for channeling our shared everyday reality. To serve this process it must act in accordance with and, to be really vital, supercede the network within which we live our lives. The designer who wants to operate on and in this complex web must make us aware of all the connections that pass through, around, and between us all the time.(XX) A practice of this sort is made up of many connections, intended to suggest others. It is an art of multiple things held together by "disjunctive synthesis," by logical conjunctions prior and irreducible to predication or identification. Such indeed is its principle of selection or affirmation: "Only retain what augments the number of connections." The principle discourages any unified plan of organization or development in favor of an unlimited plane in which one is always passing from one singular point to another, then connecting it to yet something else.(4)

A physicist once told me that everything is already here, we just have to find it.(30) But your practice, as I understand it, deals more with how to connect the parts than simply finding them. So you leave the domain of the readymade and appropriation (if you were ever there in the first place) and move into something rather different that deals with visualizing the interstices that go unseen.

Going back to something we touched upon earlier, it's not about the parts so much as how they are used and how they relate to one another. Gilles Deleuze once put forward a radical notion about the 'space' of abstraction, which is, in short, not based on the great 'not'—on the absence of figure, image, or story. He identifies an abstraction quite different from the self-purifying kind. His notion is of those 'abstract machines' that push art forms beyond and beside themselves, causing their very languages, as though possessed with the force of other things, to start stuttering 'and ... and ... and'. This stuttering abstract 'and' can be connected not with dying or heroic self-extinction but with a strange anorganic vitality that is able to see in 'dead' moments other new ways of proceeding.(2)

Our lives are increasingly atomized.[2,3,4] We sequester ourselves in suburbs and cars,[5] with cell phones, iPods, and computers.[6] These technologies both connect us to each other and introduce new forms of separation[7,8] by focusing our attention away from our actual physical surroundings. More often than not, graphic designers compound this fragmentation: our conventionally accepted role is to produce market-driven messages that compete for people's ever-scarcer attention.[9] Can we, as designers, find more stable, thoughtful, interconnective ways of responding to these conditions?

Rebecca Gimenez
STATEMENT

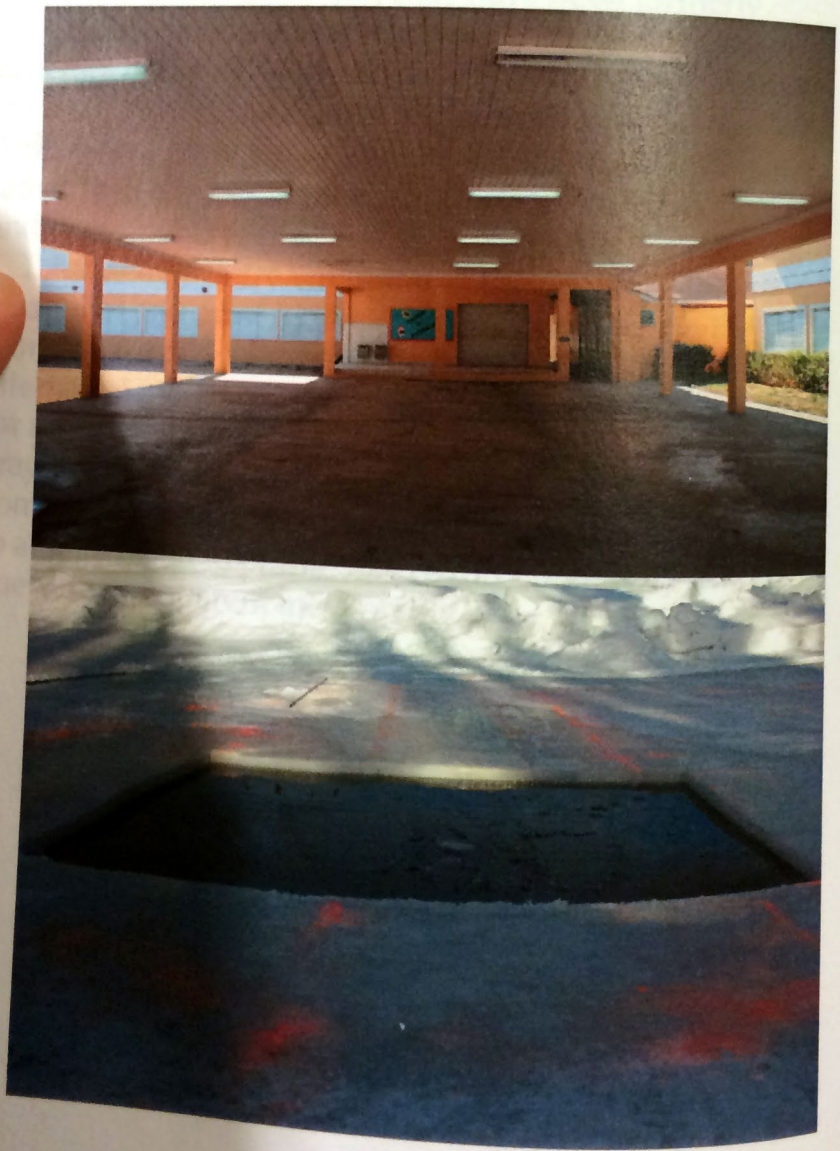
At the same time, an ethos of peer production is gaining momentum on the internet. In this environment, collaboration is a given.[10] People are working together on intellectual property that they effectively give away. Audiences and makers who may have been formerly marginalized can now see each other in the horizontal structure of the network, an arrangement that subverts the top-down hierarchies of traditional mass-media. Perhaps we can begin to think of a culture of participators rather than one based more simplistically on producers and consumers.[11]

These activities are emerging at the center of the wealthiest and most market-driven economies in the world. Network culture can be seen as a laboratory for alternative modes of exchange and, at its best, as a beacon for an alternative value system. I know that historically, graphic design is the product of a market-driven commodity exchange model—but I want my practice to at least begin to problematize this complicity, and to question its apparent inevitability.[12]

I'm using network culture as a jumping-off point for a practice that locates itself in physical rather than virtual space. Through my work, I want to bring a spirit of collaboration and an awareness of each other to the collective spaces we inhabit every day. My visual language grows from this agenda and simultaneously feeds it. I return again and again to a visual vocabulary of openness, attachment, and collectivity: transparent things, things that stick to other things,[13, 14] large things that are made up of small things.[15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20] I try to respond to the available richness of the environment rather than overwhelming it with my own vision.[21, 22] Above all else, I try to leave room for a viewer to engage with the work on her own terms.[23, 24]

Leaving gaps and absences for a viewer to resolve in her own idiosyncratic way[25, 26, 27] opens up the possibility for the work to generate new discoveries, ideas, questions, and alternatives.[28] Paradoxically, my favorite way to engineer these gaps is to create a sense of continuity from disparate parts.[29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37] For example, in the collateral for Tavares Strachan's Arctic Ice Project, I emphasize the distance between Alaska and the Caribbean by collapsing the two poles onto a single surface. The imagined distance becomes more evocative than any attempt to represent it. By taking for granted that the viewer has an imagination, I can speak in a more nuanced register than would be possible if I assumed a more didactic position.

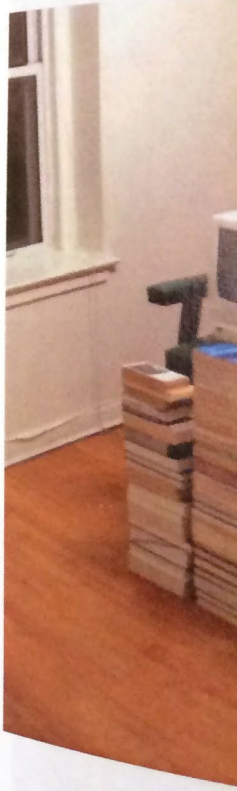
in collaboration with Forest Young



Rebecca Gimenez
STATEMENT

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in collaboration with



Occasionally I am given over to making objects that I hope will appear to have dropped out of an alternate reality:[38, 39, 40, 41] a copy machine that belches my name and immediately eats it again, or, perhaps more richly, a single dense cube comprised of the entire contents of my living room, painstakingly stacked and compressed to reflect a way of thinking about home and property that is, like Borges' Chinese encyclopedia, unthinkable.[42] The space and its contents are easily recognizable as ordinary and domestic, but reorganized to suggest alternative imaginings of both domesticity and property.[43, 44, 45, 46] It holds a kind of candidness: it is the result of frank effort by a human hand to reshape an environment according to motivations that we recognize as peculiar.[47, 48, 49]

in collaboration with Jacob Rhodes



Transparency recurs in my work[50, 51, 52, 53, 54] because I am drawn to the idea that a viewer can choose literally to look straight through it,[55, 56, 57] an approach that privileges the existing environment over the work itself. This inclination directly informed the sign I made with Sebastian Campos[58] for Yale's painting and printmaking department. We were invited to design a large banner for the all-school open house in the picture window outside the school—a window that looks into the office of Patsy Mastrangelo, a favorite staff member. Rather than covering the window, we designed a matrix of office dots that allows Patsy to see out and us to see in.

Rebecca Gimenez
STATEMENT

in collaboration with Sebastian Campos



These formal strategies rely on a sensitivity to the environment[59, 60] and an understanding of the viewer as an autonomous entity. It is this sensitivity that allows my work to reach people more than any particular set of formal gestures.

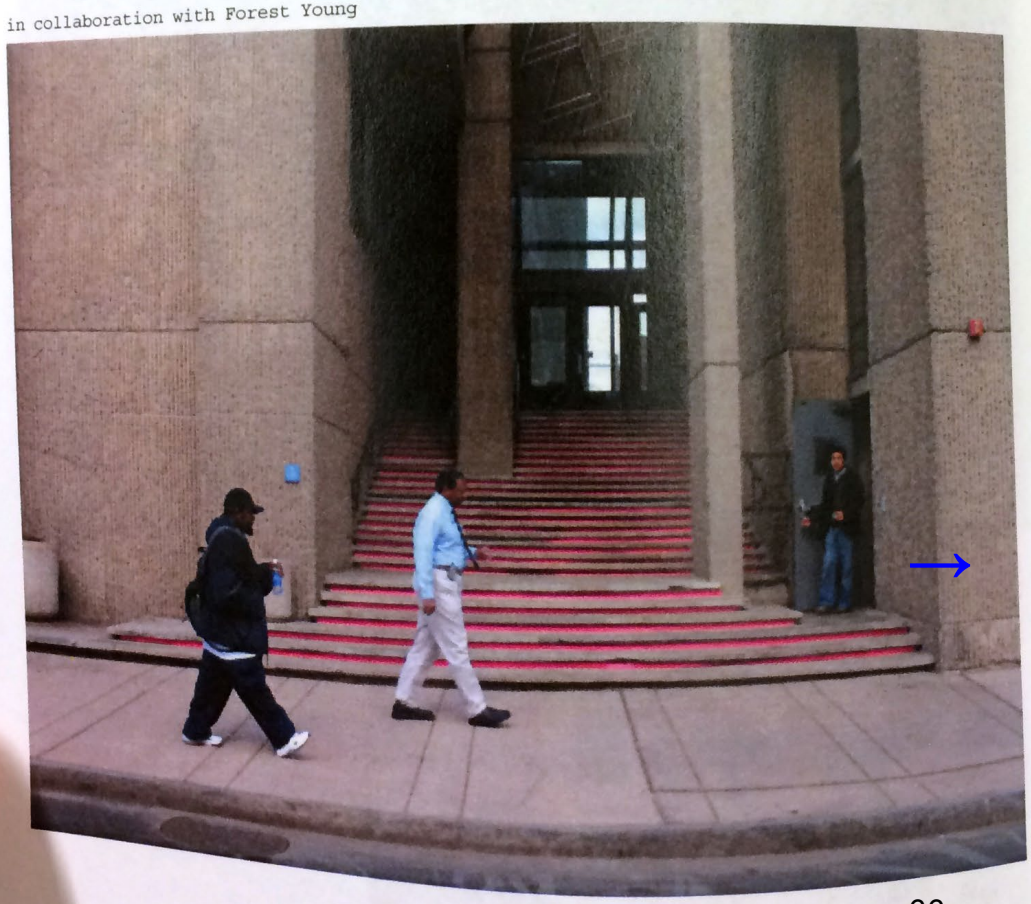
I want the viewer to take my work as an offering instead of a request, an invitation that embodies the possibility of its own refusal.[61, 62, 63] I made a flyer that manifests this idea by printing a message on the back of a sheet of stickers I had designed for my classmates. I positioned the flyer near the door to the studio in the hopes that people would take the stickers and gradually reveal the message through the transparent waxed-paper backing. There was no coercion to participate, only an offering that people were free to ignore. People did take the stickers[64] and the text appeared, owing in large part to the spirit in which the flyer was made: as a gift to the studio on a particularly crappy day.

in collaboration with Yale graphic design studio



At its best, my work behaves like a gift:[65, 66, 67] given without being solicited, evaluated on its own terms, and reciprocated—if at all—in a manner the recipient deems appropriate. The identity I designed with Forest Young for Yale Women in Architecture reflects this mode of exchange.[68, 69] As part of a campaign to launch the organization, we transformed the everyday appearance of the architecture building by lining recessed spaces with fluorescent pink duct tape. We then used the same tape to hang posters inside the building.[70] Visitors encountered the installation before seeing the collateral, creating an important temporal separation between the tape and its intended significance: it allowed visitors to experience the space on their own terms without having to assimilate a message until later. We hoped that the installation would eventually become tied to the organization in the viewer's mind, creating opportunities for diverse interpretations based on each person's initial reaction to the space.

in collaboration with Forest Young



Rebecca Gimenez
STATEMENT

Trust is at the center of this practice. Our clients, Elizabeth and Shelley, trusted us to create an identity for Yale Women in Architecture that accurately represents its stated aims of increasing the visible presence of women at the school. We trusted the students at the School of Architecture to bring diverse and sophisticated responses to the campaign.[71] Any collective depends on trust to be sustainable: each participant must trust the group to return the value of her work in some form that she may not be able to predict.[72, 73, 74]

Rebecca Gimenez
STATEMENT

in collaboration with Forest Young



I see myself not as a service provider who uncritically translates the client's content into persuasive messages, but as part of an openly reciprocal web of relations that include the client, the viewer, the printer, the programmer, the mail carrier,[75] my colleagues, my teachers, my neighbors, my family, etc. I propose a working arrangement informed by continuous collaboration–with clients, colleagues, the viewer, and of course among the viewers themselves–instead of a linear process of temporary problem solving. I see my practice as a vehicle for expanding the conditions that make it possible for myself and others to continue working in this way.[76]

For these reasons, I am ultimately more concerned with the way a piece of graphic design works than the way it looks. Rather than trying to compete for the attention of the most viewers, I want my work to speak quietly to the people who encounter it, heightening their awareness of themselves, their surroundings, and the people around them. My goal is not to compel, seduce, or satisfy; each of these serves only to draw people away from the world at large and deeper into their own desires, which would only reinforce the isolation that I seek to mitigate. Instead, with every act of making I am seeking an integrative moment. My goal is to let people pass through my work and then point them outward to reobserve the world around them.

From: Andrew Shurtz <andrew.shurtz@yale.edu>
Date: April 17, 2007 6:31:48 PM EDT
To: gdmfa-list@panlists.yale.edu
Subject: helvetica / nor'easter afterparty + thesis shoot

Dearest classmates, here's the deal:

The logical considerations of my thesis book have led me to an unavoidable conclusion – my book must take the form of a party, my work must exist in said party, and (most importantly) I really really really (really!) want each and every one of you to attend said party (even if it's only for a short time).

Andrew Shurtz
STATEMENT

The party will be what you've all come to expect from La Casa de Andrew y Sebastian, except with my work all over the place: posters on the walls, books out, videos projecting, a performance of the JT remix, etc. I'll be documenting the party with a few others (especially in regards to interactions with the work) and these photos will be compiled chronologically to form the bulk of my thesis book. It would be extremely amazingly awesome if anyone else wanted to take photos (the more the merrier, it would really help my book to have extra pics) but this is in no way a requirement. All the alcohol etc is on me; I really just want everyone to have a good time.

I realize this late in the semester that a party might not be on the top of everyone's list, but it's really important that as many of us appear in the documentation as possible for this to be comprehensive. Feel free to stop by for two minutes to get in one photo then jet, that one picture would mean the world to me. Seriously! Especially first years and prelims!

So, yeah:

25 High St. Apt 22
Thursday, April 19
after the Helvetica screening (10–11ish?)
free beer, etc

any questions, comments, complaints, holla back!

love always,

andrew

I'm Feeling So Real.

Electronic Voice Phenomena is a term that refers to unexpected voices originating from nonphysical spirits as a form of after death communication that can be observed in recording media. An EVP believer can find evidence of these communications in sources as disparate as white noise, video feedback, recordings of fans, or just ordinary audio recordings, and EVP have been reported on practically any device capable of recording the human voice. These voices are usually reported as being very similar to actual voices, but with an unusual and otherworldly characteristic like a quick speed or "empty" quality.

Andrew Shurtz
STATEMENT

An EVP researcher typically tries to capture "voices" by first verbalizing a question to the spirit to be contacted, and then "listening" with recording device trained on some sort of ambient background noise. EVP voices are usually found in conditions that create noisy recordings rather than clean, well produced ones.

For the past year I've been looking at ways of working that begin to question the ever-dominant design impulses of order, control, and rationalization. I've decided to name my investigations "keeping it real" – partly in homage to what Alain Badiou refers to as the key feature of the 20th century, "the passion of the real"; but also in ironic reference to what I see as the unrealistic nature of design's orderly obsessions. An obsession, it seems to me, that only further highlights the ridiculousness of the human experience.

Andrew Shurtz
STATEMENT

The work began from a series of questions about hierarchies of authenticity, or contemporary notions of the so-called 'real', triggered by aspects of media that interest me. Why, for example, is a photocopy often considered more "authentic" than a high-quality scan? Why is a record considered to be more "real" than a CD? Brian Eno states "Whatever you now find weird, ugly, uncomfortable and nasty about a new medium will surely become its signature. CD distortion, the jitteriness of digital video, the crap sound of 8-bit -- all these will be cherished and emulated as soon as they can be avoided." In other words, the errors introduced by these reproduction techniques seem to be pointing to something outside the technology itself.

Writing about the multiple flaws inherent in the repetitions of Andy Warhol's silkscreens, Hal Foster states that "these pops, such as a slipping of register or a washing in color, serve as visual equivalents of our missed encounters with the real . . . they seem accidental, but they also appear repetitive, automatic, even technological." It's as if these glitches point to the social experience of these reproduction techniques, and by highlighting them we're

exposing ourselves to the reality of their inability to capture true experience.

This has provided or perhaps inspired a number of opportunities for my design practice. I've made no attempt to prevent mistakes and errors from shaping my work. In fact, I've preferred to actively generate systems of error through technological misuse, exploiting flaws in hardware or software to achieve something with more depth or grounding. A video recorder connected in a feedback loop; a set of trashcans converted to a drum kit; the Photoshop sharpen filter pushed to extreme levels of over-use. Along with allowing space for mistakes to happen I prefer the idea of leaving things unfinished, incomplete or raw as a necessary counterpoint to the usual desire to over-polish, over-refine and over-design. Rules should be flexible; respect the unexpected.

Andrew Shuntz
STATEMENT

Ultimately I think the point is to consider the ways in which these errors provide or remove meanings and readings in the work. I appreciate something that the artist Mike Kelley has said about the relationship between ones own motives and a certain collective notion of "the real": "Art must concern itself with the real, but it throws any notion of the real into question. It always turns the real into a facade, a representation, and a construction. But it also raises questions about the motives of these constructions." I think that it is important to always remember that the use of errors to highlight certain notions about what we consider to be real will always result in a fabrication. However, it is the emphasis on the fabrication itself that keeps present certain questions – concerning value and meaning – that are important to me, and essential to my work.

The phenomenon of EVP forces us to look in two contradictory directions:

1: EVP is the manifestation of a misuse of technology on the part of the Ghost. By abusing technology and using it in unintended or wrong ways, the Ghost is able to communicate with us. This misuse is not only one of subversion, but also of salvation, as the Ghost is able to transcend its otherworldly status and communicate its needs or desires to us. This technological element is crucial in allowing the Ghost to bridge the otherwise highly separate physical and non-physical worlds.

Andrew Shurtz
STATEMENT

2: EVP can only be explained as the result of a misreading of an inherently error-filled source signal. EVP is entirely fabricated in the mind of the viewer, and the "voices" are merely audio artifacts or glitches that are read as human speech only due to the brain's need to fill in patterns. The capacity of the source signal to contain errors is of extreme importance, and as a result EVP researchers tend to favor low-quality sources in which imperfections are more easily introduced. A cheap digital recorder with a high compression ratio is an ideal device; its compression algorithms creating distorted sounds that often fall near the normal spectrum of the human voice. It is almost an inevitability that a suitably excited researcher will eventually hear voices in such a signal.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Mike, Sebastian, Rebecca, and Andrew chose to respond with an MP3 of a group Skype call. This transcript has been edited to remove sections about the low quality of the Skype call.

I could only identity Rebecca's voice (as it was obviously a woman speaking) so instead of singling out Rebecca's responses, I chose to leave all voices nameless. This also reflects their decision to respond as a group and not as individuals.

♪♫ SOUND OF SKYPE CALL CONNECTING

Hello?

Hello?

Did we lose someone?

You can't expect it to work properly.

I'm here, I'm here.

So let's go back in time. I just got a message from Twitter, that my Twitter account is 7 years old. It's my Twitter account 7 year birthday.

Oh, that's lovely.

But you know what that means, though? We got it in school.

Yeah, I know. I got mine too, and I deleted it.

You didn't tweet it?

What?

Alright, guys. Let's go back in time. Back in the days of thesis. So how do we respond to this?

I have no idea.

Have you ever tweeted anything, Andrew?

I'm sorry, what? Have I responded to her?

Have you ever tweeted anything?

You're garbled. What ⌂ was that?

So are you! I'm trying to figure out how I can record this.

Now I can hear you.

Oh, ok. Have you ever tweeted anything?

Like, five times. I think I literally have 5 tweets. I have a tweet from 2007 that just says, "Charging my laser."

☺ LAUGHTER

Thesis. So what did you guys think about her… idea?

I'm trying to remember the idea.

She has an idea?

I don't know what her idea is.

I couldn't tell what the idea was, it sounds like she's basically just contacting previous people and asking about their thesis.

I got the impression that her idea was like, "What's the point of this thesis thing?"

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

Did anyone open the attachment PDF?

It was horrifying.

Ouch.

I want to read Sebastian's.

You read it, you proof read it.

I know, sorry. I was tired.

☺ LAUGHTER

Actually, I was looking back at that book when I was applying for my job because I photographed a bunch of things in Spain, and I started looking through it, and there's so many typos! There's like hundreds of typos.

☺ LAUGHTER

But not in the statement, in the whole thing. The

Sebastian Campos, Mike Gallagher, Rebecca Gimenez, and Andrew Shurtz RESPONSE →

captions are like the most ridiculously written things!

That's the nature of the beast.

I always remember that lecture that Jop van Bennekom gave, and he said if he hadn't started Re Magazine when he was in grad school, but afterwards, he would have called it "Boring Magazine" instead.

A more accurate name.

Well, he was saying that grad school forces you to use a certain kind of language.

I was thinking that same thing when reading mine, like "Who wrote this?" This is an out of body experience.

I told Sebastian my theory about the architecture of the graphic design atrium. It's—

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

☺ LAUGHTER

So we have the option of responding as a group, or replying individually.

I think we've opted into

⌂ responding as a group, but I'd probably respond very differently as an individual.

I'd probably take things a lot more seriously if I was a single person.

Well, she sent it to us sort of as a group. Therefore I think it should be replied to like that.

But she, like many people, may be under the false impression that we still do things.

We do. We don't do any less than we've ever done, we've just never done that much.

☺ LAUGHTER

Essentially, We Have Photoshop is true to its motto, you know, "don't try too hard."

☺ LAUGHTER

Mission accomplished.

I was interested in the pictures of what's going on in Sebastian's book. Like is it held together with a pile of rope?

I don't know what the deal with that is.

That's the hold the page down thingy in the library.

God, thesis, Jesus Christ. I don't want to look at this again.

Well, you don't need to read it.

Yeah, I'm just looking at the pictures.

What typefaces were in style 15 years ago? →

Well, the same ones we use now. Not much has changed.

♪♫ SOUND OF CLICKING

"Did it inform your first job out of school?"

Sebastian Campos, Mike Gallagher, Rebecca Gimenez, and Andrew Shurtz RESPONSE

Well, to the extent that I didn't have a first job… I think it got me fired from Italy. The sort of mental cloud I was in.

But was that your thesis, or was that Yale full stop?

Yeah, it was Yale full stop. I think the bubble made me immune to the fact that actual companies are full of people who hate each other, and are trying to undermine each other at every turn. I was very much not prepared for that change in culture.

Right, me too. I don't feel like my thesis has had any bearing on anything I've done, until now. And now I work on things that are, like—the result has the least relationship with anything I made at Yale. Like, I care so much less about the outcome of the work than I ever did before. I only care about the experience of working. And now I feel like I can look back at this thesis and see things in it that I care about. Or could claim. But only because I stopped caring about the work.

Learn to stop worrying and love the thesis.

I don't know if the thesis actually informs anything we've done… but the fact that it didn't actually convey what I was actually thinking, that's always been in the back of my mind. Essentially, the failure of the thesis to indicate the things I was actually interested in has always informed what I do.

But it's a constant worry, because I think the same thing. I'm always like, "Maybe I should have done it 8.5x11… blah blah blah."

I always think about what Paul said, which is that I should have just cut out the entire middle, and just had the beginning and the end. Like none of the crap of talking about my work. He said, "Just cut that part. Just have two pages." And he's right.

My favorite bit of the entire thing are the first pages with the Post-It notes people left on my desk. And the poster for Paul that I never made.

That's your favorite part? The part you never made?

I like the sticker sign. I actually like the things I made.

Of course you do!

The fun things that were made were never made

→

for the program. They were made around the program. Like the Whitney posters, the sign. You know, the sign was nice. It made people happy. For a while, until it degraded. It was very cheaply produced, they decided not to take it down… I think it's a successful piece of work, as far as work goes. So, there were fun things there, actually. But then it's like you were saying, the experience was a lot more interesting than the actual thing. And I think the thesis helps to convey that, that what was interesting was what was happening around the work.

Reading this, it's like, God. This is painful.

Yeah, I'm reading yours right now. "The world is a mess!"

No, that's not my thesis. That's my presentation from September. Which is even worse. Jesus, don't read that part. It was trying so hard.

See, mine would have made sense if Paul hadn't gotten involved. Like I had something that made a semblance of sense… and then I had a chat with Paul, and it all went downhill from there. But essentially, the thesis was a catalyst for me to abandon graphic design as a discipline, so I guess it was very… important.

The thesis though, or Yale? Back to Mike's question before.

Well, maybe her question isn't framed correctly.

Well, I don't know what the thesis is there now, but at the time, it felt very very different from what I was actually spending my time doing. Like it's this other thing that you kinda have to do, but it's not really what you're trying to do, or what you give a shit about.

But it's still the most important thing.

Well, to some people.

But for the school. Like the way the program was structured, it was the most important thing. Like you could almost do nothing, but if you turned a thesis book in at the end, they were cool.

But essentially, isn't the thesis supposed to be a diary or a record of your two years there?

I think when we were doing it, it was in a weird spot, where it was no longer, like, a 200-page

study of the circle or whatever, but also not a diary, really.

Essentially the notion of a catalog raisonné—it is kind of like a diary.

But it might as well be kind of like an On Kawara, "I'm still alive." For all that it's worth to the program, it's just like, "I was here, I made stuff." They can't very well have a program where people just drift in and drift out, with no proof they were there. From their perspective.

If you look at my book as a whole rather than just a statement, it is a diary. The language is so pretentious, it's unbearable. I think that I didn't realize it was a diary. There's a slight conversational tone in places that makes it diary-like, and I should have just rewritten it as a diary.

Should have been a blog.

Well, yeah.

But if it would have been a blog in 2007, it would be a dead blog now. It would be a ghost blog.

But can you really separate the thesis in your head from the two years you spent there?

I can, yeah. Totally. I actually think time in school at Yale was really important to me. But thesis, not so much. I feel like being there was extremely important to figuring out what the hell I wanted to do—I'm still figuring it out, but it got me going.

Well, the thesis was the one thing where you had to really try and put everything together.

Yeah, but for me, it was too soon to put all that together. I needed a few years.

But still, I felt that even though my thesis wasn't fully formed, the fact that I was having to try and put it together was the important thing.

Yeah, I mean it wasn't an empty exercise. That's what I was saying earlier: that the failure of the thesis is the most important thing about the thesis. The fact that you tried to put it together, and that you lacked the language to accurately describe what you were trying to do. The book, I mean, when I was photographing it, it was last year, and looking back at the whole artifact...

Oh, did we lose Rebecca?

I'm back. "Diaries" was the last thing I heard.

→

Oh, we were talking about how the usefulness of the thesis was the exercise itself, trying to put it together. And then I said that perhaps failing to put it together because you didn't actually know what you were trying to do was the most important thing. And looking back at the book last year, you kind of realize all of the things that are wrong with it. But it becomes like a reference point, because it becomes like the only time in your life where you will consciously sit down and try and account for what you want to make. Unless you actually sit down to write a book.

I actually feel like I do that every so often. And moving to California really did for that for me, as well.

How?

Well, everything had to change because I couldn't keep making what I had been, because it didn't exist there. So I had to do other kinds of work, and then figure out if I actually wanted to be doing that kind of work. It turns out that, yeah, I do, I just didn't know it before.

But, essentially, as a record of that time, it sort of serves to frame conversations we've had over the past 5 or 6 years. Even if the thing itself is not really what it should have been, I guess it's what it could have been.

I feel like I wasn't ready to write that, at the time. I look back at some of the things I've made, and I'm like, "Some of this is interesting, and actually still interesting to me now." What the thesis tried to wrap around it is not what is interesting about it.

I guess my problem with the thesis is this notion that you elaborate this supposed methodology and then you make work to demonstrate it now, in the spirit of a mathematical proof. But it's actually the opposite. You're making a bunch of shit and then trying to make sense of it. So the way it's framed…

Well, the idea of making it a book. It's a book that's going to sit in the library forever.

But it is a record. It's a record of a period of time. But then again, it's interesting because

→

think of programs like the Royal College, where what you actually do is produce work and a show at the end of the year, and then you write a 10,000 word essay on a topic of your choice.

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

Hey, you know what we should do for this girl? We should write a Yale thesis that just consists of four pictures. Maybe these four pictures. Maybe I should make this picture my Skype picture, this "I am still alive" picture.

Actually, if you put those four pictures together… let's give her a picture reply, come on.

What pictures?

The ones in Skype.

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

Yeah, the four of these, it's not a bad set. Just give her this, give her the audio file, and we can be done.

Wait, where are the pictures?

In Skype, above the chat, it's the avatars. You have the dude with the umbrella, Mike has the 70s lady…

Sebastian has the money cat, and I have "I'm still alive."

Well, I'm all down for humor, but this seems like a bit of a cop out.

Well, we'll give her the audio file, too.

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

I think that's exactly where we should end this conversation.

Child's voice: Um, are you mama's friends that she works with?

They're my friends, but we don't actually do any work together.

We do non-work together.

We're a non-studio.

We have a very prolific non-practice.

We're a non-critical, un-studio.

Someday, the project will come along that we clearly have to make.

Yeah, we're just waiting for it.

It's just hasn't come yet.

We're transcribing that, right?

Yeah.

Who's transcribing it? When I say "we," is it going to be a tragedy of the commons kind of thing?

Well, when you say "we're transcribing it," what you mean is we're sending an MP3 to this lady, and she's transcribing it.

Should we offer to answer questions or anything later for her?

We're not sending her this whole thing, right?

Sebastian Campos, Mike Gallagher, Rebecca Gimenez, and Andrew Shurtz

RESPONSE

→

What's the audio version of redaction?

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

Enough of therapy.

Yeah, I'm going to go eat some food.

I'm going to a North Korean restaurant tonight.

Wow, really?

Yeah, the one North Korean restaurant in Moscow.

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

And the cover will be the four pictures. Maybe we should press a vinyl.

Yeah, send me some good names.

♪♫ ELEVATOR MUSIC

Bye!

Bye, guys.

♪♫ SOUND OF SKYPE CALL HANG-UP



Sebastian Campos, Mike Gallagher, Rebecca Gimenez, and Andrew Shurtz
RESPONSE

Geoff Han

Geoff Han
STATEMENT

In many ways, I entered the field of graphic design distrusting it. Before design, my undergraduate economics and history papers were often written in various reactionary forms including a fictional story, a lecture, and in video. At home, I made in-camera edited videos including a western, a horror, and a racist satire, and my first act of design was an animated gif-intensive website manipulated through a free download kit. These acts were representative of an unhoned working method in irony and naive "rule-breaking." Later on, as a writer, I disliked the idea that designers would take somebody else's content and assume license over it. I remember specifically disliking books dealing with Asian content that were given a Japanese binding, or websites that looked somehow technological because they were part of a new technology. Even now, I still have an aversion for over-designed form and my distrust of graphic design has become even more painfully evident.

During the spring of 2000, as an editor of a student-run undergraduate academic journal in Montréal, I experienced graphic design for the first time. A designer–a friend of a friend–was commissioned to layout the journal while two close "artist" friends designed the cover. Everything was done in QuarkXpress or Photoshop, sent through a fiery color laser copier, and then cut and saddlestiched at a local copy shop. The cover was charcoal gray with small color photographs deconstructed using various Photoshop filters, while the inside was set in 3 columns of Template Gothic. I remembering being drawn to the process of creating a physical document of texts and Images through a negotiated exchange of ideas, but found the aesthetic of "deconstruction" that the designers had deployed disingenuous to that very process. Aside from me, the editorial team seemed quite satisfied with the layout. It might have been this circumstance of opinionated difference that caused me to embark blindly into our field.

My first job in graphic design was in 2001 as a nightshift production artist for the Sing Tao Daily newspaper in Hong Kong. Using Photoshop, my job was to trace out people from the day's most compelling Images, which would then become Image masks that would be pasted throughout the rest of the newspaper. The Image masks were especially difficult because they usually involved the intricate tracings of people's hair, often tousled while passionately conducting an orchestra or scoring winning soccer goals. But the most difficulty came from having to complete each one in under 5 minutes. I quickly learned to enjoy operating software at extremely high speeds over a continuous time period, and over the course of that job, experienced a rare physical connection to graphic design that was freeing. I now refer to that compulsion as the "Hong Kong rush"–and one which I have always strug–gled to reclaim in my further experiences as a student and practioner of design.

After arriving at Yale, I chose to immediately address design through restricted means. For the past two years, I have been working under the assumption that by restricting the decision-making process in design, one can: 1. facilitate a means of response to generate unexpected and inventive formal responses to design problems; 2. expose problems inherent to and pose questions regarding the larger, social context of design. I have attempted to explore this notion through 35 projects by self-imposing arbitrary restrictions to various design problems. These restrictions have often fostered game-playing strategies that have provoked more inventive and playful means, and a critical approach to design problems. The goal has been to use self-imposed restrictions to get closer to, to physically exhaust and to completely inhabit subject matter.

The inhabitation of subject matter and a resulting improvisational mode of response has been one of the central tenets of my thesis. In the first year, I created a fictional character named Ronald Chang as a means to respond to a set of class assignments. Ultimately, the arbitrarily constructed narrative became an adventure of "documentary fiction" revolving around a fictional character named Ronald Chang, a Google search for

Printer: Ricoh Aficio CL7100, Color Laser Printer
Paper: Copy Paper, 30% Post-Cons. Content, 11" x 17", 20lb
Edge of Printable Area

Page 30
Sheet--15

various "Ronald Chang's" on the internet and coded messages received in the New Haven Register. In the end, I drove with two other students 10 hours to Gowanda, NY to find the closest physical manifestation of Ronald Chang on the internet, only to find him deceased. In addition to Ronald Chang, the following projects have marked an intensive period of invention and improvisation: Sears Portraits, in which photographs were exposed and developed through the Sears Portrait Studio in Milford, Connecticut; Deoff, which used confinement as a means to create a book; Valentines card design booth in which Dylan Fracareta and I commandeered a ticket booth on Yale campus and over the course of 22 continuous hours, we designed 60 Valentines cards for free for Yale students, professors, visitors, and staff; and Yale Assignments in which I redid Yale assignments from the 1960s.

My thesis has been also been marked by stricter explorations into self-imposed restrictions which have often worked to reframe the restrictions of time, cost, speed, space, color, format, binding, and printer as graphic design subject matter. Thus, I have attempted to link these restrictions to specific sets of design problems, and then to reveal their limits by exhausting them to their most extreme and logical conclusions. By exagerating these common restrictions to their extremes and revealing their limits, I have attempted to in fact reveal a limitlessness of possibility when manipulated by the designer. This has occured in projects including Laser Printer Tests, $1 project, 1 Second Videos, Cinema at the Whitney, and the Karel Martens Interview. For the duration of these studies, I have further restricted myself to black toner and uncut 8.5"x11" and 11"x17" formats.

Perhaps what I have hoped to achieve over the past 2 years is the discovery of the limits of my own design capabilities, as well as those of the people around me. Under the given circumstances, the most that I have accomplished has been to perform a few small acts in some manner to their extreme conclusions–or to their limits. What I have realized is that the project has been most successful when the restriction I have self-imposed is specific to, reveals something about, criticizes, and exposes the social context of the design problem. For example, in Sears Portraits, I chose to work within and question the iconic American institution of family photography; in Deoff and the Design Booth, I self-imposed confinement as an embrace of the practice of design as a service; in the Laser Printer Tests, I exposed the physical limits of the laser printer, the fundamental output device for common printed matter; in the $1 project, I revealed the minimum unit of cost that was necessary to produce a multiple page document as a critique of larger-budget design; and in 1 second videos, I reduced time to its limit of communicative value to expose its inherent power. Thus, self-imposed restrictions have seemed to be most fruitful not only when they have created an unpredictable response to a design problem, but also when they have exposed questions that undermine established notions of graphic design.

Over the past two years, I have repeatedly, with varying degrees of success, put myself in restricted situations in an attempt to reclaim an emotional and physical connection to the act of making. My choice of restrictions as a thesis topic is somewhat contextual to graduate study; within this environment supposedly "free" of restrictions, my intention has been to question and to sometimes undermine that freedom. And yet I have found a symbolic freedom by working within one second, withinp one dollar, within 8.5"x11", within the laser printer, within Valentine's Day, within Sears, within Ronald Chang, and, sometimes, within not knowing. Similar experiments have been performed in the past by Georges Perec and Oulipo, as well as filmmakers Lars Von Trier and Aleksandr Sokurov. And also graphic designers including Jop Van Bennekom, Paul Elliman and Mevis&VanDeursen. Yet, perhaps it is most

Geoff Han
STATEMENT

Edge of Printable Area
Gross Cost of Printing: $4.50
Gross Cost of Paper: $0.30

Printer: Ricoh Aficio CL7100,
Color Laser Printer

Paper: Copy Paper, 30% Post-Cons.
Content, 11" x 17", 20lb

Edge of Printable Area

Page 31
Sheet--16

in relationship to design history: that specific lineage of graphic designers who dangerously promoted restrictions as universally essential to the method of design. From Jan Tschichold to Josef Muller-Brockmann to Wim Crowel to Karel Martens. That was part of the extreme legacy of the European Modernists; and questioning it, perhaps, attests to our continual motivation to be modern.

Geoff Han
STATEMENT

Gross Cost of Printing:
$4.65

Gross Cost of Paper:
$0.32

Edge of Printable Area

Do you feel that your thesis informs your work today?

[redacted]

Did it inform your first job out of school? Do you feel as though it's more relevant now than it was when you graduated, or vice versa?

[redacted]

Geoff Han
RESPONSE

If you could go back and adjust your thesis, would you?

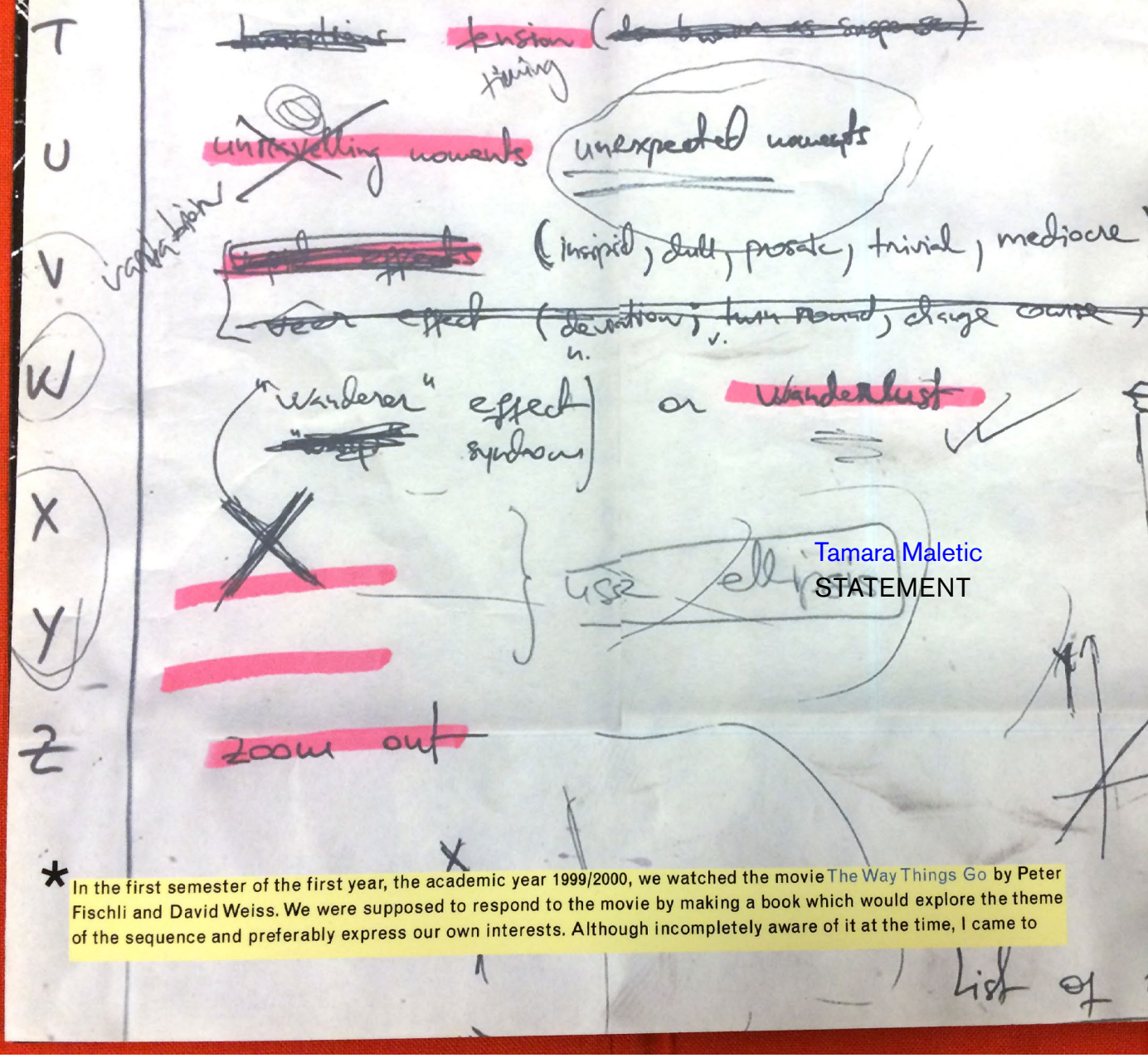
I think I would probably do it the same way.

Is there a part that still sticks with you, and other parts that seem irrelevant now? Which parts?

[redacted]

Class of 2001 and 2002, respectively

Tamara Maletic and
Dan Michaelson



Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

* In the first semester of the first year, the academic year 1999/2000, we watched the movie The Way Things Go by Peter Fischli and David Weiss. We were supposed to respond to the movie by making a book which would explore the theme of the sequence and preferably express our own interests. Although incompletely aware of it at the time, I came to

realize that my thesis, my everyday life fascinations, were clearly expressed in one sentence that I found in my notes about the movie: 'Some objects move away from the main line of movement and stop, suggesting other possibilities.' *The Way Things Go* suggests a neverending story, a sequence of different objects interacting in a linear way where one movement provokes another and so on. A couple of times the camera followed the action closely while in the background an object got off the set-up line of causal movements, a disconnection that insinuated another possible line of connections. This change in direction created the possibility for a new direction, just like the prefix 'dis' adds a new meaning to the word 'connection'.

I ended up making the book *The Construction of Sequence* structured as a list of discrete elements that could be endlessly combined into a sequence. It was a 'manual for designers', as one of my critics phrased it, that assembled some elements that contributed to the building of a sequence. The images in the book constructed a sequence, while the words de-constructed it, emphasizing its discrete parts, assembled units that could be endlessly re-ordered.

While making the book, I experienced a lurking danger of our profession: the X-Acto knife. Around 3 a.m. one morning I cut off a tiny piece of my thumb. The piece flew into the air and landed among the sequenced spreads of my book-to-be. I couldn't stop the bleeding and was taken by my classmates to the emergency room. It was my first experience of the emergency room, a rather surreal one, but that's another story. A couple of days later, I showed up with a huge bandage around my thumb. Michael Rock said to me: 'Too much hitchhiking?'

NOVI SAD — LONDON — NOVI SAD — STRASBOURG — ANN ARBOR — PARIS — CHICAGO — NEW HAVEN — NEW YORK — NEW HAVEN —

I come from Novi Sad in Serbia, Yugoslavia, and I left my country in 1991. Since then, I've lived in different cities in both France and the United States. And as Eva Hoffman, an immigrant, says: 'All immigrants and exiles know the peculiar restlessness of an imagination that can never again have faith in its own absoluteness. Because I have learned the relativity of cultural meanings on my skin, I can never take any one set of meanings as final.'

The Lure of the Local, Lucy Lippard, p289

I have lived in three culturally, socially and politically different environments: Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the United States. Moving from one environment to another caused certain shifts in my beliefs and ways of communication. These shifts also implied processes of adaptation, of learning and unlearning. Most of all, the distance from the environment I previously lived in, the movement from one place to another and the relationships between them increased my understanding of these environments. This personal experience has been of great influence on my approach to design as well as on my understanding of design as a form of communication. The ways in which we communicate are both cultural and personal constructions. Therefore, they are sets of malleable and ever-changing relations, but most of us are hesitant to practice these relations in a manner that would allow them to deviate from their established forms, to re-establish themselves and expand.

There is a similarity between the 'practice' of an immigrant and that of a designer. Both deal with the diverse possibilities of communicating with others and both occupy the unstable space of 'betwix-and-between', the designer between the client and the audience, and the immigrant between his original culture and the culture he found himself in.

ABOUT MY WRITING, 10.15.00

We had a group discussion with Michael in the morning. I decided that my writing should be the documentation of my thinking process. The topic of my thesis paper becomes the process itself (the development of my methodology).

— different aspects of design that diverge from the main process of the development of the thesis
— knowing vs. not knowing
— must be disciplined and write on a regular basis
— the writing can serve as a timeline: zero point, given aspects of the semester; four days can take less on the timeline than two hours; mental time
— a series of meditations
— mental events, digressions
— overlaying of the objective of the motion and the subjective trajectory

getting **there** **getting** there

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

1.21

DETOUR

'Detour opens onto a multitude of itineraries, creates the conditions for a further deepening, and valorizes the possibilities of an approach.'

Detour and Access, Francois Jullien, p338

Detour can be defined on a thematic level as a deviation from a routine procedure. Also detour is an approach that enlarges an existing space and challenges the ways of moving and interacting within this space. I call this approach detourism: the activity of detouring, or the activity of touring in a specific 'de' way.

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

BRAINSTORMING DETOURISM, 10.17.00

— going off the route and finding/creating new paths
— becoming space
(Koolhaas's notion of 'bigness': architecture that can 'accommodate' possibilities)
— things extra and other
— complete
— driving in Rome
— creating itineraries for multiple possibilities of approaching a thing
— the process of meandering that unfolds, opens up reality while engaging the viewer
— reality as panorama vs. reality as a state of transition
— eating a five flavor ice-cream
— emphasis on variation
— inexhaustibility of the world
— exactly
— de-meaning
— re-meaning
— becoming space
— the possibility of
— one and only
— wandering
— interruption
— contradiction
— negotiation of discontinuity
— setting the stage for possibilities
— the center of
— de-framing
— visual language for unstable contexts
— possible all
— under construction

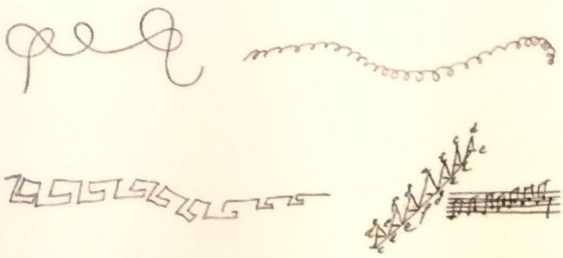
Make a poster that will be a diagram of my methodology. Must be re-writable!





Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

Detour can be defined on a thematic level as a deviation from a routine procedure. Also detour is an approach that allows me to develop an existing space to unexpected proportions, and that challenges the existing ways of moving and interacting in this space. I call this approach ‘detourism’.





Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

Free line making detours by Paul Klee
Map of the places I lived in

There are two aspects of detourism that perpetuate each other: wandering and interruption (that does not necessarily stop the movement, but often gives it a new rhythm, a new direction or links it to another movement). Through exploration of these concepts in design, I am hoping to develop different formal approaches that would express the negotiation of discontinuity and the possibility for diversion of movements. At the same time, I would like to link these formal explorations to the context of urban environment, allowing for a simultaneous influence between the two. On the right, you can see the cities I lived in. The change in type size corresponds to the amount of time I spent in these cities. My interest in detourism was influenced by my personal history. I come from Novi Sad in Serbia, Yugoslavia and I left my country in 1991. Since then, I've lived in different cities in both France and the United States. And as Eva Hoffman, an immigrant, says:
'All immigrants and exiles know the peculiar restlessness of an imagination that can never again have faith in its own absoluteness. Because I have learned the relativity of cultural meanings on my skin, I can never take any one set of meanings as final.'

subway notice*

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

I worked and lived in New York last summer and spent quite a bit of time in the subway. Numerous parts of the subway system were being rebuilt and there were many subway notices all around, informing people about changed train schedules. These pictures were taken in several 'hard hat' areas.



Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

Subway employee not questioning the authority of a poster, poster by Dan Michaelson

The subway is a perfect place for detouring and that's why the people who organized the game Midnight Madness — a game about getting lost and found in the city — used the subway as one of the places where clues were to be found. The clues were some cryptic messages that were supposed to lead us to a particular place in the city. This poster has a certain 'detournment' quality in it, 'detournment' being a situationists' device and meaning most simply 'the reemployment in a new entity of preexisting artistic elements.' Derive and detournment, Situationists' concepts, could be explored in new ways through detourism. During the game, when we found this clue, a New York City Transit employee walked by and heard our delight:

'O my God! It totally looks like a subway notice!'
He said: 'That's what it is.'
We said: 'No, it's not. It's a scavenger hunt clue.'
He said: 'Oh no, this is a subway notice.'
We said: 'No it's not. Look at it!'
He said: 'I work in the transit authority. It's a subway notice. That's what it is.'
We read it to him and asked: 'That's a subway notice?'
He said: 'That's what it is. You can tell by the coloring.'

The mentioned exchange reminds me of the importance of the formal visual language, but also of the gratitude with which we face familiar forms.

facing familiar forms** (see Perec, slide 22)

If this encounter between us and the transit employee had happened in the movie *Slacker* by Richard Linklater, the camera would probably have transferred and followed the transit employee and left us behind.







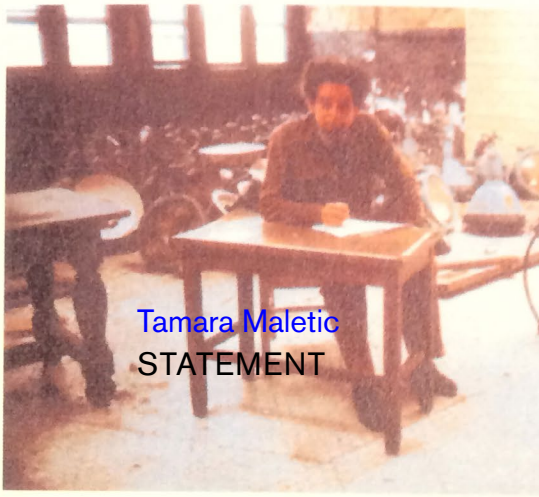
Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

Stills from the movie *Slacker* by Richard Linklater

In this movie, the camera transfers from one character or group of characters to another whenever their paths cross, without ever going back to the once followed characters. The camera traces a network of interrupted movements and gives the viewer a sense of their off-screen continuation.

A different kind of interruption can be seen in the movie *Un Chien Andulou* where we see an eye almost being cut and then the moon with a thin slip of a cloud sliding in front of it. We feel relieved, but are interrupted again and can see the eye actually being cut.





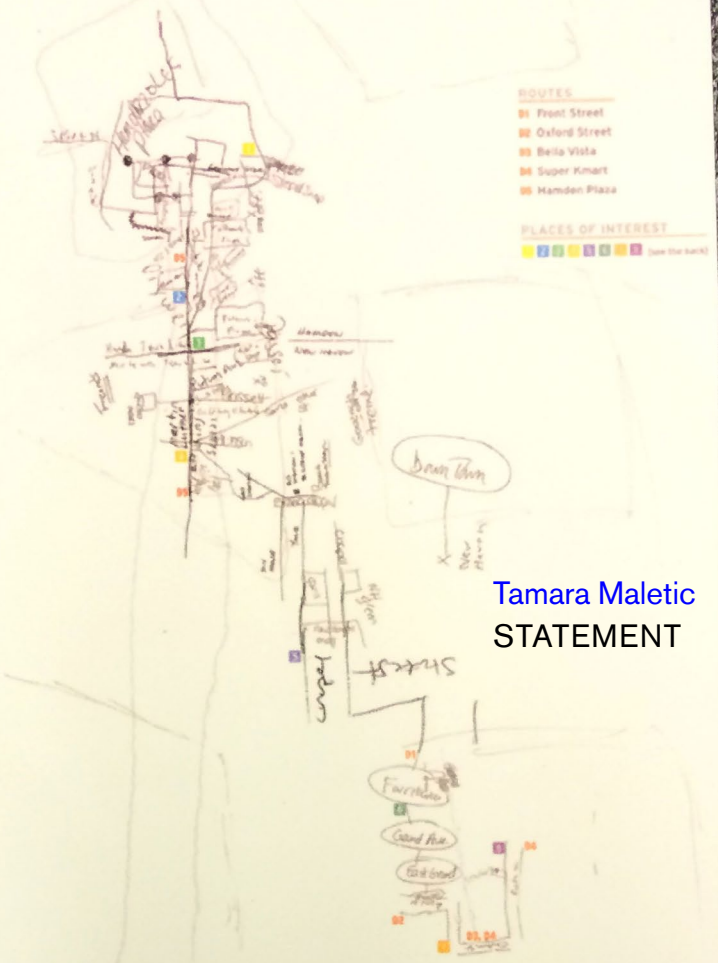
Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

On the right, you can see a poster for a soccer game designed by an unknown designer. The vertical small type on the poster reads: 'Le ballon place au centre du terrain', which means in French: 'The ball placed in the middle of the field'. Two facts are known about this unknown designer: he has a very particular approach to soccer and he likes reading Georges Perec, on your right.

Georges Perec wrote in his *Species of Spaces*: 'Notice how unfamiliar things may come to seem as a result of taking staircase B instead of staircase A, or of going up to the fifth floor when you live on the second.' This picture of Perec was taken in 1979, in Ellis Island. Ellis Island became an immigration port in 1892, when immigration to America became official and institutionalized. (For me the notion of detourism is connected to the experience of immigrants.)

u believe your world is formed
hat you look at, and you
don't look at the usual things,
your world will change.

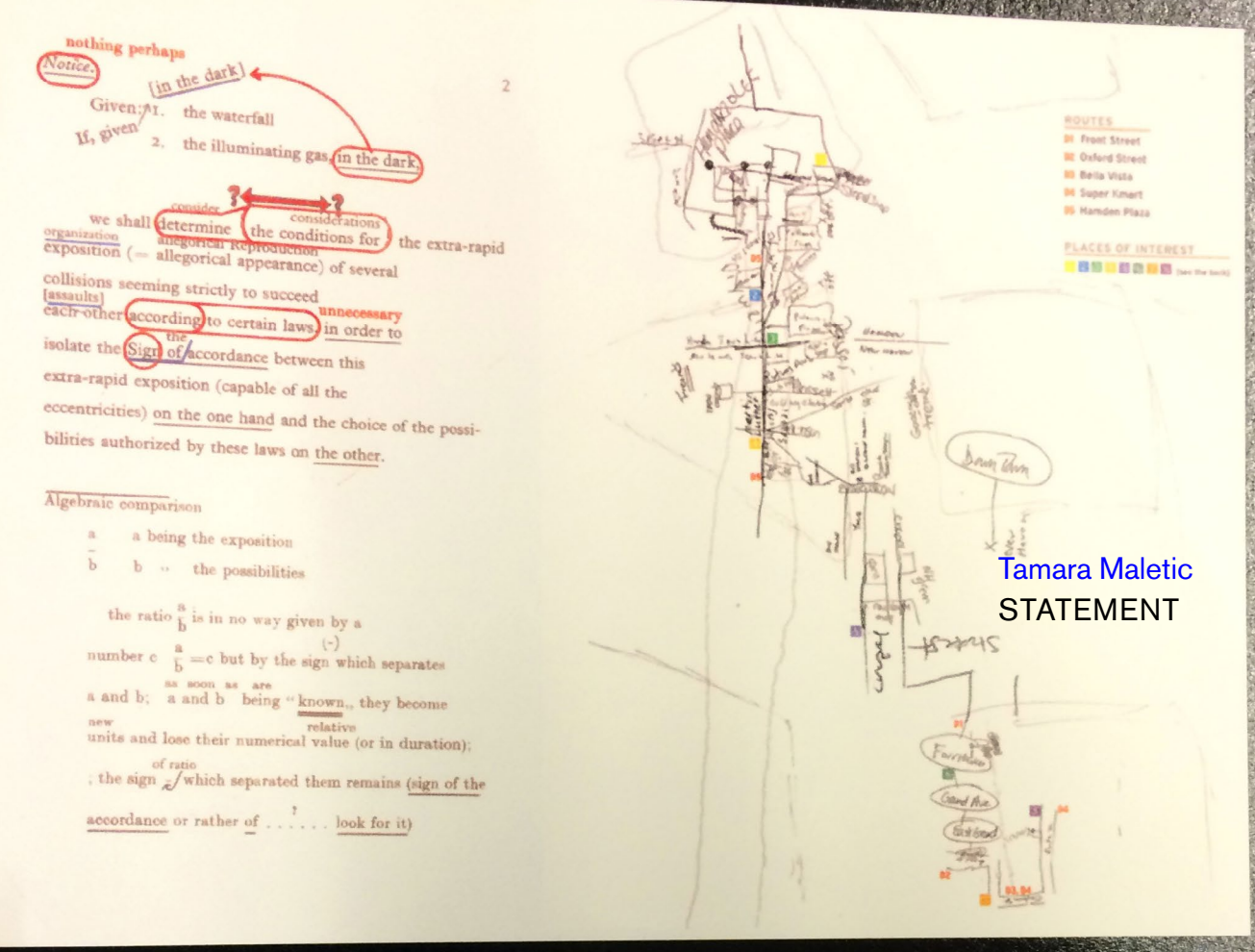
John Baldessari



Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

John Baldessari says: 'If you believe your world is formed by what you look at, and you just don't look at the usual things, then your world will change.'

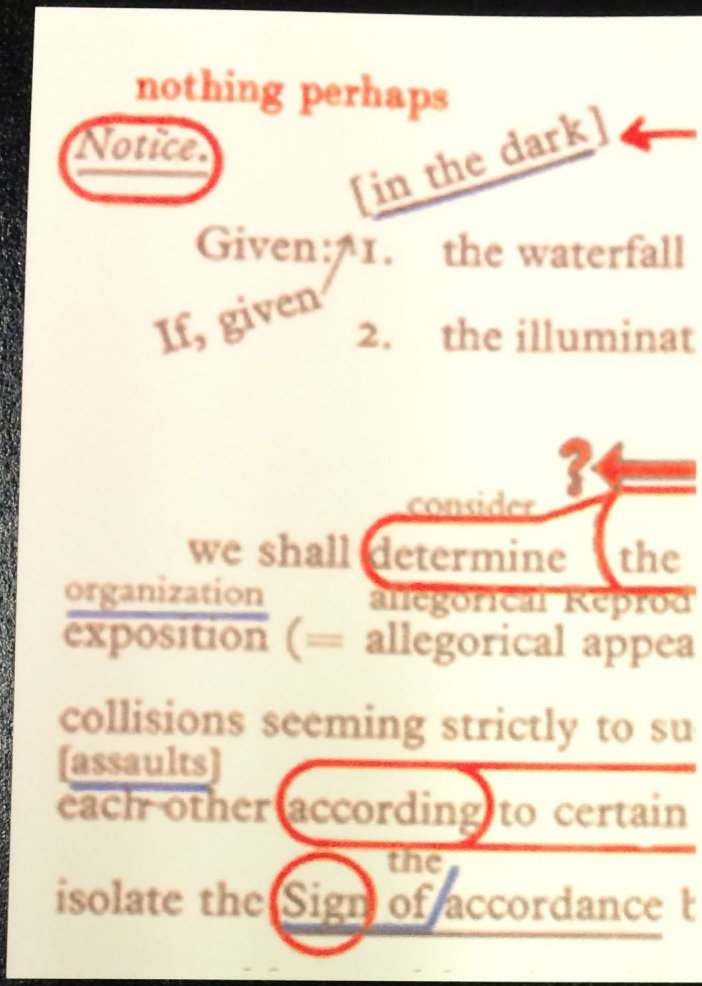
On the right, you can see one of the numerous explorations of the D bus route in New Haven that I undertook last semester. The class assignment being the only reason for my riding on the D bus, I wanted to know what this route represented to the passengers who were taking this bus every-day. I collected 25 different drawings of the route by the passengers and collaged them into one map. Each drawing is interrupted by another drawing, giving a diversified, wandering movement to the map, as well as the feel of being under construction.



Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

Page from *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors Even*, a typographic version by Richard Hamilton
D Bus Map

The D bus map has some 'under construction' quality—a quality often found in detourism—and in that way it reminds me of the typographic version of Duchamp's *Green Box* by Richard Hamilton. Duchamp's notes are a beautiful representation of the conceptual construction of the work, full of interruptions, detours and wandering.

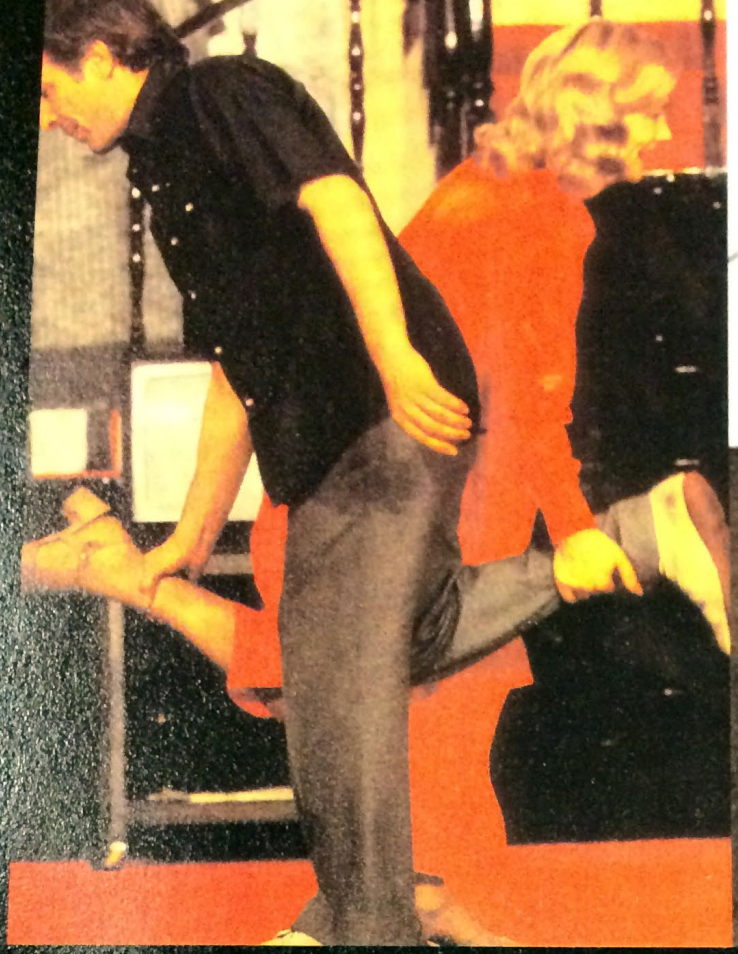


I stay here, sitting, if I'm sitting, ofte
I feel sitting, sometimes standing, it'
one or the other, or lying down, ther
another possibility, often I feel lying
down, it's one of the three, or kneeli

Samuel Bec

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

The voice and rhythm of the unconscious often emerge in Duchamp's writings. I find this to be true for Samuel Beckett's writing as well. The structure of this sentence of Beckett's allows for continuous re-structuring, which is what I attempt to explore by applying the methodology of detourism to the visual form.







Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

Photo from the rehearsal of *Opening Night*
Stills from the movie *Opening Night* by John Cassavetes

John Cassavetes explores the greetings between two persons in a wonderful scene at the end of his movie *Opening Night*. Cassavetes and Gina Rowlands are theater actors supposed to play the roles of a couple that has been together for a long time. They are getting old and are losing the willingness to communicate. Gina refuses to play such a role and involves John in a series of half-improvisations, such as this scene. The unfamiliar movement of the greeting makes them completely aware of each other. It is interesting how Cassavetes chooses to obscure this movement from us, thus giving it more intensity, but also increasing the possibility for its performance.

The possibility for performance could be explored through the process of de-framing. I am attracted to a recent theoretical idea that says that there are two kinds of framing: one the limits of which are determined by the frame itself, and the other which is open to an exterior, to what is called an open totality. If as I said in the beginning of the lecture, detourism allows for the perpetual growth of space, my design work must make connections beyond the limits of any frame, perhaps not even knowing where I'm heading next. Isn't that also in the nature of the detour?

DETOURISM (SHORT AND ABSTRACT FIRST)

As an approach to design, detourism explores negotiation of discontinuity and the possibility for diversion of movements. Detourism is a perpetual shifting from an established form. And if, as Karel Martens says, designing is 'giving form to our communication', I am interested in developing forms that support dynamic relationships, transcendental movements and ever-evolving human experiences.

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

DETOURISM (A LITTLE MORE TECHNICAL IN TONE)

Detourism encourages wandering, but also interruption that often sustains the act of wandering; interruption does not necessarily stop the movement, but often gives it a new rhythm, a new direction or links it to another movement. Detourism is interested in wandering because of its lack of destination, or more precisely, because of its disinterest in the point of destination and its emphasis on the process of reaching the destination.

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

SLEEPING IN THE A&A LIBRARY, 11.16.00

What will be the form of my writing? How will it 'fit' into my book? What will my book look like? How should I represent my process? Look again at Karel Martens's *Printed Matter*.

I went to the A&A library and looked at Paul Klee's *Thinking Eye*, as an example of documenting the process of an artist's thinking. One of my favorite books of this kind is Richard Hamilton's typographic interpretation of Marcel Duchamp's *Green Box* which contains Duchamp's notes documenting the process of creation/construction of the *Large Glass*. Hamilton undertook an interesting translation of the complex subtleties of Duchamp's thinking. He successfully conveyed through typography Duchamp's meandering flow of thinking, fragmented and rich in doubts, re-examinations, contradictions, hesitations and difficult-to-reach ideas.

'To begin to decipher the enigmatic signs in the *Large Glass*, Duchamp's notes assembled in the *Green Box* are crucial. An integral part of the work, these notes are not a narrative, not an explanation of the cryptic signs. Rather, these notes serve to convey the polysemic nature of each sign and to suggest or point to possible meanings without ever defining them.'

'Interactive Strategies and Dialogical Allegories: Encountering David Rokeby's The Giver of Names through Marcel Duchamp's Open Windows and Closed Doors', Ernestine Daubner, (presented at Inter-Face: Thinking the Next Millennium', São Paulo, Brazil)

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

I fell asleep in the library. Jorge, Dasha's boyfriend, was sitting at the nearby table and he had already fallen asleep. By the time I woke up, he was gone. I checked out Manfredo Tafuri's *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s.*

— must define portals to my methodology
— what are the entries to the notion of detourism?
— should read again the text by Matt Mullican and re-think the idea of lists I had last year. Write about the structure of this poem in prose: -ing form; the title (*Untitled*); no periods; each line a different moment of life; a loose structure that can be added to and subtracted from, etc.
— look again at Perec's way of documentation and cataloging
— start collecting/creating weird taxonomies and lists (ex. Borges's Chinese taxonomy; Danilo Kis's imaginary menu in *Mansarda*, etc.)

AROUND 4.10AM, 11.17.00

I was falling asleep, intensively. I was almost 'there' when I had to sniffle, because my nose had been running for a few days (another flu sharing period in our studio!). This small gesture caused an abrupt shift from one state to another, so that I was in both states for a moment and could switch from one to another almost at will. It felt powerful. Earlier today — around 6pm yesterday — when I fell asleep in the library, the passage from one state to another and back was rather 'normal', meaning that I wasn't aware of it.

'A split-second illumination — inscribing an object, event, or scene — a sudden eruption or stripping bare that opens up other possibilities. Something pedestrian and everyday, or as Joyce noted, a crude foul-mouthed expression becomes the vehicle for a switch in mental gear.'

The Duchamp Effect, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon, p 69

Tamara Maletic
STATEMENT

DETOURISM AND THE OTHER

'Your detourism is to my mind directly linked to gaining experience. *Experience* itself comes from latin *experientia*, which means a direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge, but also the state of having been affected by gained knowledge through direct observation or participation; something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through; the act or process of directly perceiving events or reality—a transitive verb!'

Miodrag Mitrasinovic, architect

'Your interests are stated very clearly. The danger, of course, is to getting totally lost in your detour because anything has seemingly to do with the subject. Do you want to set any criteria what is a topic that is worth diving in or do you want to just let it go?'

Peter Bilak, graphic designer

I agree with Miodrag that detourism is about direct observation and participation, about experience and knowledge. What is important to me as a designer is to create work that will 'activate' the reader. I am interested in creating spaces that, along with information, accommodate possibilities and uncertainties and allow for the reader's wandering and re-creating of these spaces. I remember reading Peter Bilak's writings on transparency where he criticizes the designers who overdesign the text by giving a fixed meaning to the reader. This brings to mind Jean-Luc Godard's films. My favorite quote by Jean-Luc Godard is: 'Americans always ask me: What do you mean exactly? And I tell them that I mean, but not exactly.'

DIAL-A-BUOY

After *Weather Vane-opolis*, I continued working with wind data on the interactive piece *Dial-a-Buoy*, in collaboration with Dan Michaelson. I decided to use the wind data recorded by the buoys placed off the cost in the USA and used National Data Buoy Center's site as a source for live data (http://seaboard.ndbc.noaa.gov/index.shtml).

In the beginning of the project, I was interested in creating a kind of visual organism that would 'feed' on wind data. I decided to collapse all the buoys into one point and to map the wind directions of many buoys onto a shared color wheel. Each buoy was represented as a pair of vectors with a common point of rotation. The length and the thickness of the lines represented each wind's intensity, the opening angle of the vector pair corresponded to each wind's gust and the color of the lines and their rotational angle corresponded to each wind's direction (see p 12.36). This model proved to be too static and unsatisfactory.

In my second design, I decided to keep buoys separate and make them into individual wind sources on the screen. Since I had already chosen to part from a geographical representation of the buoys' placements, and to represent wind as originating from [illegible] measured by the buoys, I decided to have the buoys randomly appear on the screen. The next step was to allow the user to move the buoys and re-group them as he wishes. The building of the wind field on screen that would simulate the physical world model of the wind forces demanded two things at that point. Dan and I had to ask for help a friend of mine, a physis, to point out the right formula (see p 12.37) for calculating the influence of different wind forces on . . . something on the screen, something that would function as a kind of bob, a kind of trace of the wind forces. I chose the word 'shift' as the element to be blow around the screen by the winds, since I was interested in giving some typographic qualities to the piece and also in the metaphorical and playful possibilities of this word to talk about the nature of the wind as well as to insinuate some qualities of detourism. I really enjoyed deciphering the formula that my friend gave us, but I think that Dan enjoyed it even more, since some explanations of it were written in Serbian. During Dan's implementation of the formula into Director's lingo, lots of tweaking was needed to achieve a 'natural' blown-by-winds quality on the screen.

During the process of designing and programming, Dan and I talked about the best ways of combining the informational aspect of the piece with its poetic and playful qualities. We were looking for an interesting 'bridging' solution and decided that the interface influenced by the wind actually enriched both aspects of the piece through the creation of an interesting space where the device for obtaining the data and the manifestation of the data converged.

To enrich the overall 'feel' of the piece, I chose John Cage's *Music for Amplified Toy Pianos* as the sound piece for the project, since I found that its rhythm and nature were able to dialogue with the rhythm and nature of the happenings on the screen.

We are still tweaking the formula in search of the best blown-by-winds qualities of the piece.

Tamara Maletic

STATEMENT

Introduction: Thick and thin

Looking down from the top of the World Trade Center, much of the island of Manhattan was visible at once, neatly laid out according to the grid lines conceived for it in the nineteenth century. Michel de Certeau began an essay about "Walking in the City" (1984) with that view, observing that life at street level is much different. People don't always or even usually walk along the grid, they jaywalk. In a variety of ways both spatial and political, locals take secret shortcuts only they know. More than a station from which to observe the city, during its life the World Trade Center began to operate as a node or a lighthouse for these pedestrians to navigate by and as an antenna through which their culture was transmitted and received.

Dan Michaelson

STATEMENT

There is no mythological "native" in some state of nature whose knowledge of the city's hidden byways is as personal as the lines on his palm. But as a graphic designer and a pedestrian, life for me isn't like the view from above either. It's more some mixture of the outside-looking-down and inside-looking-out perspectives, like a moving series of frames cast onto my windshield.

Graphic design is mainly the loss of space and the compression of stuff.

For designers who want to present their own message or their client's, the printed page is a press that flattens and freezes manifold ideas and experiences into simpler, legible ideograms.

Paper and screen are two-dimensional, and the limited resolution of ink, wood pulp, raster display and the human eye circumscribes what can fit into an area of reasonable size.

Graphic design is flat not only for these reasons, but also because the images it trades are representations only, "mechanical reproductions," shadows of real life.

One could imagine less flat, less contained ways of communicating.

We could recite our message orally over a period of many days, like Homer narrating the journey of Ulysses or a cantor singing daily passages of the Hebrew torah. We could erect a building or a sculpture. We could establish a library through which readers might wander.

tter N.

In its nature, graphic design does not include these strategies.

We might begin near the beginning, with one simple moment in the definition of the modernist graphic design tradition. Otto Neurath is sometimes credited with the invention of the "international" system of iconographic language. His *Isotype* (1937) was constructed as a lexicon in which every noun is paired with a picture and every picture gets a noun. Verbs were excluded from the system, the always implied verb simply to "observe" — "observe, here, the form of a man." In the isotype Eden we were all naturalists and taxonomists. But understandably, in usage the sense of that unstated verb slipped into the implication to "observe the restriction," in other words follow the rules and don't pee in the wrong place, please.

De Certeau saw a battle between space and time on the city surface. The "modernist" dream of a set of centrally planned traffic-control devices and functionally determined neighborhood zones was constantly [illegible] by the shifting whims of pedestrians. On the ground people acted according to centrally dictated function but according to personally derived desire, which impelled them to cut through chainlink, skateboard in swimming pools and climb over monuments. In the context of urban planning, "modernism" had come to mean conservativism, or what de Certeau called the dream of a "nowhen," like water engineers who dream of a dam that does not erode. Pedestrians, on the other hand, dreamed of a "nowhere," in which all avenues were free of spatial restriction. Action would always rail against plan, the verbs against the nouns.

In the verbless isotype world, each picture is worth exactly one word plus an exclamation mark. Figures are encapsulated like toys in see-through blister packs at the store, ready for action but trapped, flattened and mute.

Around the time of Neurath's proposal for isotype, Stalin found the timeless plane of graphic design to be an elegant match for a revisionist policy in which truth was defined at the surface of political need. Through airbrushing, "disappeared" party members vanished from party photographs as well. A manipulation of print projected the illusion that the status quo was a condition without history and therefore without possibility for change.

Closer to the present, Microsoft is accused of coercing vendors of Windows 95 into distributing its Internet Explorer product as well. In response the company

redesigns the Windows 98 interface to look and feel like Internet Explorer and claims in court that they are one product, not two. But the programming code itself — one program, or two? — remains obscured.

In a more minor example of the same approach, the designer Stefan Sagmeister, when asked by the *New York Times* to formulate a response to the collapse of the World Trade Center, imagines a new box for Cipro and a lapel pin. On the plane of graphic design, all problems are branding problems, addressed through the manipulation of image and perception, by tweaking the front end, rarely by engaging cause and effect. The designer chooses not to engage either international politics or local action in his representation.

Like urban planning (and Stalinism), graphic design can claim a progressive legacy, the Bauhaus. But graphic design, the manipulation of surfaces to reflect the message of a client or shift the function of a product, is also always doublespeak. Simplicity and the compression of space serve to eradicate the aspect of time from the interface between message sender and receiver, so that the reader is presented with a done deal instead of something more contingent. A noun, rarely a verb.

Dan Michaelson
STATEMENT

In Beckett's *Endgame* (1958), the characters Nell and Nagg pop up halfway each from separate ashbins on the stage, like jack-in-the-boxes. "What time is it, my pet? Time for love?" asks Nell. But in the narrative of the play, time has already stopped. "Kiss me," declares Nagg. "We can't," replies Nell, only a tease, stuck in her ashbin.



There is no resolution to this characteristically twentieth-century paradox in which graphic design's task of representation undoes the dynamic relationship between conversants even as it establishes the language of their conversation. The problem can only be qualified and depicted. Graphic design, a narrowcast of rich messages, is thick and thin, ambivalent.

Sometimes while I'm walking around, pretending to be a tourist in my own city, the "click-cli-cllllllll" of a film projector becomes just barely audible, a soft reminder of the materiality and temporality that stubbornly root every image. How can I move around in this stuff? What kind of space is this?

1. Thesis: The hut

A house resonates not only as the place we grew up or the place we go home to. It is also a *kind* of space; a house is a kind of space unlike others, but what kind of space?

In *The Poetics of Space* (1969), Gaston Bachelard explored the significance of the house — or more primitively and generally, the "hut" — in human experience.

For a dweller or a visitor, the real or imagined hut has an inside and an outside. It provides "protection against the forces that besiege it" and, lit from inside, it is a beacon for travelers. (37)

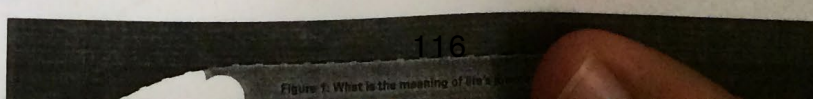
Dan Michaelson
STATEMENT

The hut has depth or verticality. The top of the hut, according to Bachelard, reminds dwellers of the human ability to build and subordinate nature to their own desires; while the foundation — the cellar or the hearth — symbolizes the uncontrollable and fecund natural world outside, a kind of id.

> The house, the cellar, the deep earth, achieve totality through depth. The house has become a natural being whose fate is bound to that of the mountains and of the waters that plough the land. The enormous stone plant it has become would not flourish if it did not have subterranean water at its base. (24)

Here Bachelard seems to describe the natural world as a generator of built form. He quotes: "The flower is always in the almond." This motto evokes the verticality of the tree and the tower, the teleology of the natural world, and the "intimacy," interiority, and nascence of the pregnant hut. (24)

The hut according to Bachelard is a dreamed or "oneiric" experience with similarities to reading. It is a place for fantasizing, and remembering a childhood home means remembering or re-reading childhood fantasies. Like the flower's remembrance of the almond or the almond's dream of the flower, the hut is a "unity of image and memory" and a "functional composite of imagination and memory." (16) Yet because a hut's significance is poetic and intimate, its particularity is ultimately indescribable and un-analyzable; its personal meaning is so deeply rooted that it precedes language.



> [H]ouses that are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like showing them to visitors. We can perhaps tell everything about the present, but about the past! The first, the oneirically definitive house, must retain its shadows. For it belongs to the literature of depth, that is, to poetry ... All I ought to say about my childhood home is just barely enough to place me, myself, in an oneiric situation, to set me on the threshold of a day-dream in which I shall *find* repose in the past. Then I may hope that my page will possess a sonority that will ring true ... All we communicate to others is an *orientation* towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively ... [W]e orient oneirism but we do not accomplish it. (13)

The hut is interior, vertical, rooted and dreamlike.

1.5. The flip

When put upon, such as if someone plagiarized his work in college and handed it in as their own, my friend Mat would sometimes groan, shake his head, say "That's all corrupt," and make a small gesture with his hands as if to overturn a nonexistent table. That would be the extent of his response. The gesture became known as "the flip." Looking back, Mat's friends considered that the flip symbolized a way of life — slipping between a big deal and no big deal, sincerity and insouciance, flipped flippancy and a flippant flip. Goddard referred to a 1960s "generation of Coca-Cola and Marx." In the 1990s our deflection between such poles had become an invisible vibration.

2. Antithesis: The photograph

It's well known that a picture is not the perfect representation of what was photographed. Looking at a photo is not like looking at the photo's subject. Like the hut, a photograph is a kind of space; but a photo is a space unlike the spaces we live in. What kind of space is it?

In *Camera Lucida* (1981) Roland Barthes attempts to locate the *eidos* or essential quality of the photograph. In many ways the space of the photograph seems opposite the space of the hut.

While the hut is alive, constructed, generative, and re-lived, photographs are still. "Photography," Barthes writes, "is a kind of primitive theater, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead." (32)

Dan Michaelson
STATEMENT

While the hut is deep, the photo is flat like paper, a sign only that the referent once existed.

> However hard I look, I discover nothing: if I enlarge, I see nothing but the grain of the paper: I undo the image for the sake of its substance; and if I do not enlarge, if I content myself with scrutinizing, I obtain this sole knowledge, long since possessed at first glance: that this indeed has been ... (100)

Barthes eventually locates a photograph that has deep personal meaning for him, his mother as a young girl in her family's greenhouse. But he writes:

> I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the "ordinary"; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity ... (73)

Dan Michaelson
STATEMENT

The subjectivity and secrecy — the inability to retell — that Barthes ascribes to the Winter Garden Photograph resonates with Bachelard's description of the hut as mere "orientation" to dreaming.

The photograph is flat, still, and secret.

Could a photo be like a hut?

3. Synthesis: The photo-hut

Of course the synthesis of photograph and hut is that 70s-era offshoot of strip-mall architecture, the photo-hut: a cheap parking-lot film processor and developer worked by pimply teenagers (and voyeurs, according to movies like *Manhunter* and the sitcom *That Seventies Show*). The photo-hut is kiosk-shaped, a darkroom with drive-up window deposited onto the asphalt of shopping mall tarmacs.

Nearly gone now, in its heyday the photo-hut was a hyperextension of car culture and architectural economy. Processing Kodak film needed neither storefront windows nor walk-in traffic, just darkness. The kiosk was about as big as the developing equipment and its operator. Thus the economics of photo-hut architecture can be deduced. Why pay for expensive retail frontage when you could lease a spot in the parking lot instead? The photo-huts sent their fiberglass roots down into the blacktop.

The photo-hut, an interior space designed for the manufacture of flat images, symbolizes one part of the postmodern zeitgeist, that tension between surface play and depth, or wordplay and meaning. The photo-hut is a problematic space that oscillates between extremes and seems on the verge of collapse. Its interiority, verticality and rootedness contrast with the flatness and weightlessness of the images it produces. Private and public, light-safe and exposed, the photo-hut's small size is overwhelmed by the massive flow of images, family histories and love affairs that channel through it, so that its topology is paradoxical, but the concave photo-hut is flat in another way too; it's dead like Barthes' photograph. No longer a part of most peoples' lives, the photo-hut is a part of American cultural memory, a hyphenate you won't find in dictionaries, but which nevertheless retains a hint of meaning inflected by the short history of its usage.

Dan Michaelson
STATEMENT

Photo-hut.

Because of the photo-hut's hybrid or ambivalent status, not only interior but also flat, it's no longer appropriate to ask "What's in there" or even "What does it mean." One must now ask, "What **happens** in there?"

Or simply "What's **up** with that thing?"



You might imagine that every drop of ink and every computer pixel is actually a tiny photo-hut, a cellular machine whose function is to receive signals from the outside world, digest them internally and excrete new transmissions. Ink becomes an active operator, gains a weak force of its own, and is no longer just the passive operand of external actors.

Bachelard and Barthes are both working at the photo-hut. Bachelard, the analyst, remarks stuffily, "The flower is always in the almond." Barthes, a generation younger and in some ways his successor, does the flip: "The photo is always in the hut."

Duchamp is in the photo-hut. In "The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even" (1915-23), known as the Large Glass, images are rendered between two plates of glass, which form a freestanding surface the size of a generous window. Even while use of perspective drawing and the transparency of the glass create unexpected depth, the rendition of the images is flat, not painterly, and physically squashed between the double-panes. The work is iconographic, but a narrative reading is no more fruitful than an abstract one: "This is not a

7

The Autocolloto is built from a scanner, cd player, keyboard, mouse, a few thousand computer instructions and an initially blank screen. With source materials of their choice, users create a typewriter collage that dances to their music; elements interact in

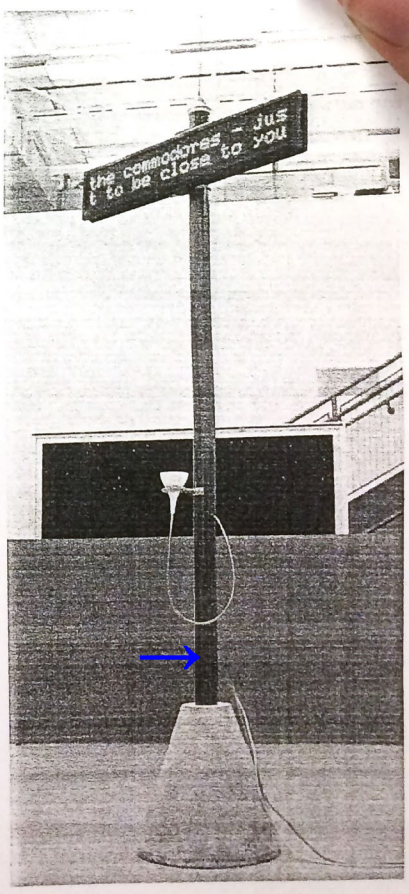
comic strip." Ruptures and fissions, accidental cracks in the glass, areas of clarity and opacity, undulate across the flat surface. Duchamp left a set of instructions to recreate the Large Glass, a series of operations that testify to his elevation of the verb, "What's **happening** in there," as equal with the noun.

Karel Martens is in the photo-hut, organizing and tagging bits of metal he's collected, and using them to make colored monoblock prints on top of old business forms. The surface of his pages has become an urban gutter in which to scavenge.

DJ Shadow is in the photo-hut. Kool Keith is in there too. They're sitting on opposite sides of the Large Glass, and they're playing the game of Battleship to settle the war between the DJs and the MCs. DJ Shadow is mixing together the soundtracks from six different movies. They're all recognizable but they make something new, too. Kool Keith responds with a dense amalgam ("Earth People," 1999):

Dan Michaelson
STATEMENT

Now my helmet's on, you can't tell me I'm not in space
With the National Guard United States Enterprise
Diplomat of swing with aliens at my feet
Comin' down the rampart through beam on the street
Obsolete computers, compounds and dead sounds.



Do you feel that your thesis informs your work today?

Tamara

Yes, surprisingly, it does quite a bit. And I say surprisingly, because when I was working on it at school, it felt more like a theoretical, almost fictional, exploration of design and my interests within it. Only after being able to experience my thesis ideas through everyday work on actual client projects did I become more aware of some of its core principles and values, and have I realized that they have been forming and growing with me for a long time. And I also realized the timing for exploration of some of these ideas was right: user generated content and participation; identity as system that changes over time; designing for change, flows, networks, etc., were all rapidly developing design (and cultural) tropes as I was graduating in 2001.

At our studio Linked by Air, founded with my partner Dan Michaelson in 2005 (the year YouTube was born), we've been exploring a lot of these ideas from our very first project: the new wiki website for the Yale School of Art. We created our own content management system with a couple of main goals in mind:

— Make it easy for everyone at the school (students, staff, faculty) to change and contribute the content on the website. This would allow for the website to feel dynamic and fresh even though the school didn't have anyone in charge of updating the website. It would also work as a multi-voice platform rather than a single, centralized expression. It seemed appropriate to let students use it as a digital bulletin board.

— Set up an intricate system of permissions that would allow everyone to edit the website, but not all parts of it. Students shouldn't be able to edit the Admissions content, but they are still allowed to post on that page, for example.

→

I remember that at the time, a couple respectable designers (that we love and have learned from), called our approach anti-design. They said they loved it, but they still called it anti-design. I wonder if they would call it the same today, for example.

Did it inform your first job out of school? Do you feel as though it's more relevant now than it was when you graduated, or vice versa?

Tamara

Not so much the first job, partially because I was still mulling it over, but also because the way design was practiced at that place wasn't the best fit for my thesis. But already a year later at my second job, I worked on the new website for MIT featuring a daily changing homepage image, that anyone could contribute, and a daily changing color palette. Each palette consisted of 15 or so colors, so it took some time to make the whole system work well. It was a dream job at the time.

After starting my own studio, practicing along the thesis ideas became more relevant and easier. It's actually hard to do it any other way now, haha. Well, maybe not hard, but less interesting to me. Occasionally, I wish I was a little braver and was practicing in an even more extreme way—not for the sake of being more extreme, but switching some unknown switches, possibly discovering some unexplored gestures and ways of enabling communication. But we already get too many comments like: "Very nice work—edgy. Do you have some more professional-looking work to show?"

Dan

My first job was actually Tamara's second, working with Lisa Strausfeld, and our work on that team did extend the ideas both of us were thinking about at Yale, and it also seeded ideas that we are still exploring. The kinds of projects I undertook as a student were definitely the starts of investigations that I'm still continuing, and I often go back to them or think about them. So the thesis needs to be considered not just as an essay, but as a body of work or the expenditure of a few years making work. (An allocation of time that is hopefully tactical in some way.)

⌂ →

But, even explicitly in my thesis and in my thinking at the time, I tried to think about graphic design not as the production of any particular objects but as a kind of productive space, a set of evolving approaches, situations, or contexts. A trade, in the sense of something you do with other practitioners in a particular time and

place. You can imagine Linked by Air's physical studio as the photo hut I jokingly talk about in my thesis essay, and I've often talked about our studio as a kind of camera obscura filtering the world, as I imagined in that writing. We even visualized it that way once, when we shut the blinds and projected the live transit of Venus onto one wall, an image of our studio that we discussed at the Brno Biennial.

Tamara's and my shared interest in design as a way to move through time, which in a way is the best takeaway from my thesis text, has definitely driven Linked by Air's approach and values. Working in new technology has proven a perfect way to explore those values, for example by making systems built to evolve and improve over time—an idea we explored in different ways starting early on, on Lisa's team.

I have to say it was really nice to print out the PDF of my thesis text that you sent me, and not be sure whether the hands in the photos are mine or yours, Grace. Twelve years ago isn't so long, but looking at those pages and re-reading the text, I'm pretty sure that I was aware at the time of design as a thing that could frame the past, but should be an expression of the present, and should somehow be sure to age. A decent approach to teaching, too.

If you could go back and adjust your thesis, would you? How so?

Tamara

I don't think I would. I still pretty much believe in most of it, if not all. Perhaps I'd push myself to look for a wider range of references and influences and not stick primarily to art, literature, film, etc.

Dan

My thesis book physically is a very large folio format, with just a few pages, and so part of me wishes it existed in a package that could roam around with me for reference, like Tamara's binder thesis does (hers is currently on our office shelves). I also hear that it is falling apart at the fold in the library. Then again, the core text is at the center of each page and so I think I like imagining that the big margins may eventually fall away, and

the folio could turn back into the scanned letter-size Microsoft Word document at its heart. As a student, I once saw this cardboard box that all the thesis books get dumped into, and to be honest, it really horrified me. I probably wanted to make something that wouldn't fit in that particular coffin.

Is there a part that still sticks with you, and other parts that seem irrelevant now? Which parts?

Tamara

It's all still quite sticky!

Mark Owens

Writing and the Construction of Urban Space in Jem Cohen's *Lost Book Found*

In beginning a discussion of a film that I take to be an exemplary meditation on the materiality of writing in contemporary urban space, it seems appropriate to begin, not simply with a quotation, but with an object. It is a souvenir keychain in the form of a small book titled, New York Story, and as the title promises, the tale this volume has to tell takes in the scope of the entire urban landscape. For, when pressed, a button on the side triggers the spring-loaded cover of the book to open, revealing a compact model of Manhattan in miniature. Oriented to the south, the model is fronted by the vast green expanse of Central Park, with the Empire State Building and Twin Towers clearly legible in the cluster of buildings that forms its center, the Statue of Liberty looming larger-than-life in the background. Perhaps amusing enough as a clever piece of kitsch engineering, the keychain also embodies in a particularly condensed form the tension between the desire to grasp the complexity of contemporary urban space as a totality (meant here quite literally, as a holding in the hand) and the materiality of the book that structures Brooklyn filmmaker Jem Cohen's remarkable film **Lost Book Found.**[1]

[1] Cohen, Jem. *Lost Book Found.* Gravity Hill, 1996.

Mark Owens

STATEMENT

Indeed, the keychain seems fetched from one of the many New York curio shops and discount stores that Cohen documents in such lush detail. Moreover, in its form as a book the keychain resonates with a number of foundational texts in the theorization of contemporary urban space that have drawn parallels between the city and the written text, among them a passage from Henri Lefebvre's **Right to the City**:

> **The city was and remains object, but not in the way of particular, pliable, and instrumental object: such as a pencil or a sheet of paper. Its objectivity, or 'objectality,' might rather be closer to that of the language which individuals receive before modifying it, or of language (a particular language, the work of a particular society, spoken by particular groups). One could also compare this 'objectality' to that of a cultural reality, such as the written book, instead of the old abstract object of the philosophers or the immediate and everyday object. Moreover, one must take precautions. If I compare the city to a book, to a writing (a semiological system), I do not have the right to forget the aspect of mediation. ... On this book, with this writing, are projected mental and social forms and structures.**[2]

[2] Lefebvre, Henri. "Right to the City," in *Writings on Cities.* trans. and ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. 102.

Here, Lefebvre uses the comparison to the written book in order to point up the textual, or linguistic, character of urban space as a socially constructed form. As a souvenir that attempts to conceptualize the city in its totality through an exaggerated miniaturization of urban space through the form of a book, the keychain both embodies this textual understanding of the city and points up its inevitable failure. For, as Susan Stewart has remarked, the souvenir "is by definition always incomplete," standing in a metonymic relation to a now lost, supposedly "authentic" experience.[3] Just as the keychain seems to desire to "translate" the city into a book that can be grasped as a whole (from cover-to-cover), so too, **Lost Book Found** turns to the materiality of writing and the book form

in an effort to grasp the increasingly disorienting space of the contemporary city as a readable text. Nevertheless, as Cohen's narrator discovers, the fragmentary writing that makes up the city is always inevitably a partial representation of the ever-shifting urban totality, a jumble of handwritten notices, decaying signs, and scraps of paper.

[3] Stewart, Susan. On Longing. rpt. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. 136.

Loosely documentary in format and composed largely of short scenes shot in Super-8 on the streets of New York during a six-year period in the early 1990s, **Lost Book Found** is semi-autobiographical, a fictionalized account based on Cohen's own experience as a street vendor when he first moved to the city. The film opens with several shots of Manhattan rooftops at night, as we first hear the voice of the film's narrator attempting to locate himself in the urban landscape:

High above the city, there are thousands of views like these. I'm looking down from an office building and twenty-six floors below almost all of the executives and secretaries have long since caught their taxis and commuter trains home. I look west, wondering how far over you can see, if it is possible to find Ninth Avenue from any of these office windows. Far away, I hear a sound like the ocean, traffic I guess. I can't see the west side of the city at all.

Mark Owens
STATEMENT

The scenes that accompany these remarks are lush, sped-up time lapse images shot from the upper floors of a skyscraper. Figures jitter and move in the windows of adjacent buildings as traffic lights streak haltingly along the avenue below. As Michel de Certeau has noted in his essay, "Walking in the City," traditionally this kind of view of the city from on high—atop the World Trade Center, in his example—enacts a scopic fantasy, a god's eye view that would make the complexity of urban space readable in its totality as a "transparent text."[4] It is the dream, too, of the souvenir keychain, whose exaggerated topography attempts an impossible view of the whole of Manhattan. In opposition to this model, de Certeau insists that the city is actually written in the everyday practices and movements of city dwellers walking on the streets, those who "follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it." (93) "The networks of these moving, intersecting writings," he insists, "compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces."(93) Similarly, Cohen's narrator cannot locate himself from the office building window—one of thousands of possible views. His gaze is partial, incomplete, and the remainder of the film thus turns to those who populate the city streets—the push-cart vendor, window shopper, and pedestrian—in order to examine the fragmentary urban text as it is written at street-level.

[4] Certeau, Michel de. "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. 92.

Told in voice-over along with short, primarily black-and-white scenes, roughly the first third of the film following the rooftop scenes recalls the narrator's job ten years prior selling roasted peanuts on Ninth Avenue. The narrator explains that his position behind the cart provided a unique view of the city: "I discovered that simply by standing behind the cart and selling I had put up both a wall and a window, from which I could watch what happened on the street, on the block, on that long corridor of businesses and passersby. And as I became invisible I started to see things that had once been invisible to me." Instead of the view from on high, it is this "window" made possible by a kind of street-level commerce that shapes both the narrator's and the filmmaker's vision of the city. The remark is also accompanied by one of the first of many scenes of writing in the film, a jump-cut close-up of a faded sign painted on the side of an apartment building:

a crumbling capital 'S' and 'H' straddle a window, the remnant of a piece of signage spelling out 'FISH' along the length of an entire floor. The scene suggests that this new invisibility includes an awareness of the various forms of writing that make legible changes in urban space over time.

The narrator goes on to describe an encounter with a sidewalk fisher who collects objects that have fallen through subway gratings, and it is in this figure that what Lefebvre might call the "objectality" of the city finds its most concrete representative in the film. The narrator explains that the sidewalk fisher had "devised a wide range of systems and instruments for retrieving objects depending on their weight, shape, and how they'd fallen. He could tell a lot about certain metals by their distant appearance in the shadows under the iron gridwork, and he knew a great deal about the city." Here Cohen presents a ground-level reader of the urban text, one for whom the city is legible in its discarded, neglected, and lost objects. The narrator goes on to explain that previously the sidewalk fisher had sold other objects, "scrap metal, clothes, electronics, used books," and after asking if he had anything left to trade or sell the street fisher had returned with a peculiar book:

It was a composition notebook full of handwritten listings, page after page of places, objects, incidents, all having something to do with the city. ... The book wasn't filthy or falling apart, but you could tell it had been around a long time. It reminded me, a little, on the outside, of something from school, maybe a notebook from a science lab. On the inside, it looked at first like a salesman's records—hundreds of addresses, dates, and so on. But it was carefully divided into chapters of some kind, and things were grouped with other things for some reason. And some of the groups were given titles or headings. It was those titles that made the whole thing strange.

The narrator borrows the book and reads it for a day, but decides not to purchase it from the sidewalk fisher. The listings, however, begin to haunt the narrator's memory, and the remainder of the film documents the process through which the categories in the lost book come to shape the narrator's experience of the of city over the following ten years. This experience, as the gestures to de Certeau and Lefebvre have already begun to suggest, is one in which the very space of the city is understood as a shifting, complex scriptive system, both a text to be read and a place of public writing. In this way, the materiality of the lost book—which is only ever glimpsed in the film, a shadowy object, or a blur of handwritten pages—and the textuality of the city are brought into contact through the figure of the narrator, whose frustrated attempts to locate himself in urban space are interrupted by the remembered voice of the book and its listings, dates, times, and categorizations.

Often these categorizations are heard in the background, or as a voiceover to specific scenes: shots of storefronts, signs in windows, graffiti, and litter blowing on the sidewalk. For example, the narrator explains that "'potential versus kinetic energy' was written by a listing of hundreds of liquor stores," and elsewhere the book-voice uses similar categorizations: "atomic number" describes prices in a grocery store window; "conservation of matter" designates a clearance sale display, "the alchemist" a pawn shop, "Mendel's Law" a men's clothing boutique, and "the observatory" an establishment for off-track betting.

Further, as the narrator explains, his attempt to make sense of the categorizations and their relation to the space of the city takes on a specifically textual dimension:

And parts of the book come back in flashes, bit and pieces; sometimes the listing is triggered by reasons I couldn't guess. Certain places, things, incidents, that seem to fit like words in a crossword puzzle with a shape that's always changing, whose subject I was never sure of in the first place.

The categorizations seem to represent attempts to systematize the the city's complexity through natural laws and logics, and are used throughout the film to designate various locations of low-capital economic exchange, including sidewalk bazaars, discount stores, resale shops, and souvenir stands. This yoking of the scientific, the economic, and the spatial resonates strongly with another foundational theorization of the modern city, Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life." In this essay Simmel argues that the very discontinuity of life in an urban money economy, its density of sensory stimuli and emotional intensity, gives rise to an increased dependence on quasi-scientific modes of calculation:

Mark Owens
STATEMENT

The calculating exactness of practical life which has resulted from a money economy corresponds to the idea of natural science, namely that of transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and of fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula. It has been money economy which has thus filled the daily life of so many people with weighing, calculating, enumerating, and the reduction of qualitative values to quantitative terms.[5]

[5] Simmel, Georg. "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *On Individuality and Social* ed. Donald N. Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971. 327-328.

As Simmel explains, this predominance of systematization in the metropolis organizes life from the outside, "to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses which originally seek to determine the form of life from within." At the same time, however, Simmel finds that the contemporary division of labor into ever-greater specializations, combined with the sheer proximity and density of individuals in the metropolis, necessitates an increased need for self-individuation, leading to "the strangest eccentricities, to specifically metropolitan extravagances of self-distanciation, of caprice, of fastidiousness.." (336) That Cohen's narrator compares the lost book to "a notebook from a science lab" and "a salesman's records" locates the materiality of its writing within the scriptive practices of bureaucratization and the division of labor that Simmel delineates, while its idiosyncrasy suggests its function as a signifier of difference. Here, we might also remember that the sidewalk fisher is described as having developed "a wide range of systems and instruments for retrieving objects." Recalling Lefebvre, this parallel suggests that the narrator's memory of the book's lists are informed by a similar desire to understanding of the city in its "objectality," as a cryptic system, book or language that might be "read" through various forms of textuality—objects, notes, signage, graffiti, litter.

This connection between capitalism, textuality, and urban space is made more explicit by Cohen's narrator near the end of the film, when he wonders aloud about the author of the lost book:

Who wrote the lost book? Are there really any laws and systems, scales, balances? What is the city made of? Sometimes it seems as if the city is the rubble of stories and memories, layers and layers, and that objects, all the remnants of things, are like the city's skin. Many of these objects, these leavings, are the relics of commerce, the simple exchange of goods and services. Most people spend most of their lives earning a living. One man or woman's loss is another one's gain. Time is money. A man is selling puppets at the corner of 6th Avenue and 40th. It's 1993, and I'm watching from my car. Across the street to my right is a giant clock covered in plastic. Somewhere along the avenue I hear the sound of sweeping.

At this moment Cohen's narrator begins to reproduce the language of the lost book, recording the precise location and date, even as he questions the very idea of a system that would make sense of the city. But it is the sound of sweeping "somewhere" on the avenue that nevertheless points to the processes of capitalism and monetary exchange that continue unabated. This sense of the city as a totality that escapes the perception of the individual, but which is nevertheless somehow legible in the material byproducts of capitalism—what I want to call its "writing," understood in the broadest sense—points to a final set of critical terms that I want to bring to bear on a number of specific scenes of textuality in **Lost Book Found**.

Mark Owens
STATEMENT

First, in its thematization of the city as a syntactic, scriptive system, the film could be seen to stand as an exploration of contemporary practices of "cognitive mapping." Working from terms developed by Kevin Lynch in **The Image of the City**, Fredric Jameson has explained that the practice of cognitive mapping, or the specific "mental map" of city space that shapes each inhabitant's personal relationship to the urban totality, becomes increasingly difficult to maintain with the expansion, alienation, and constant flux of the contemporary city.[6] Extrapolating this concept in order to describe the increasingly unmappable relationship of individual experience to the interconnected systems of global capital, Jameson calls for the development an "aesthetic of cognitive mapping" that would begin to offer tactics for grasping those connections, enabling political praxis and the development of a new sense of collectivity on a global scale.

[6] Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism or, the Cultural logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press. 51-54.

Lost Book Found can, I think, be seen to contribute to this larger political enterprise, but in order to do so it is necessary to understand Cohen's engagement with earlier theorizations of modern capitalism and city space. Some clues as to this critical backdrop are offered by Cohen himself, when he describes the process of making the film: "'I found connections between the street vendor, [Walter] Benjamin's 'flaneur,' and my own work as an observer and collector of ephemeral street life.'"[7] Also, in the credits to the film Cohen mentions both Benjamin and **The Dialectics of Seeing**, Susan Buck-Morss' book on Benjamin's **Passagen Werk**, or **Arcades Project**. For Benjamin, the flaneur, or the idle walker and observer of the nineteenth-century city was an important figure in the development of modern capitalism whose "mode of life still surrounds the approaching desolation of city life with a proprietary lustre" and who occupies a liminal economic and political position, neither a member of the urban collective, nor fully inscribed within the middle class.[8]

[7] Video Data Bank. *Independent Video Alternative Media 1998 New Listings*. Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1998. 2.
[8] Benjamin, Walter. "Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris." in *Reflections* ed. Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1978. 156.

As representative instances of this incipient modernity Benjamin turns to Baudelaire and the Paris Arcades, glass-roofed precursors of the shopping mall, which had become glorified flea markets by the early twentieth century, perfect analogues to the discount

stores and clearance sales that Cohen documents in Lost Book Found. In his notes for the Arcades Project Benjamin seizes on the way in which the fetishized commodity comes to shape Baudelaire's remembered experience of the city. This characterization also resonates with the close attention to discarded objects and textual ephemera that structure Cohen's film. Buck-Morss explains that for Baudelaire:

> **Experience is 'withered,' a series of 'souvenirs.' 'The 'souvenir' is the schema of the transformation of the commodity into a collector's item.' In Baudelaire's poetry, the experiences of his own inner life are subject to this same fate. ... Baudelaire, 'incomparable as a ponderer,' inventoried the moments of his past life as a clutter of discarded possessions, trying to remember their meaning, trying to find their 'correspondences.'**[9]

[9] Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991. 189.

These remarks return us forcefully to the territory of the souvenir keychain with which we began and ramify outward to implicate the specific "New York Story" that **Lost Book Found** has to tell. Just as Baudelaire is seen to think of his remebered past experiences as a "clutter of discarded possessions" with hidden "correspondences," in the film the lists and categorizations of the lost book are often heard along with scenes or locations of discarded and outmoded objects and commodities—found items sold on the street, stalls with wind-up toys spilling onto the sidewalk, discount store window displays, "for rent" and "going out of business" signs. These locations also shape the film's narrator's experience of the city and his memories of the lost book, as he remarks: "The lists, the book memories, seem to be triggered by certain objects and places that have something in common. Perhaps most strongly of all I hear them in the discount stores and [video] arcades, where there isn't any weather, and the seasons are marked by different kinds of sales."

As we have already noted, these street-level spaces are also the locations of a number of the scenes of writing in the film. As the narrator remarks, these urban texts sometimes take the form of flyers that insist on "correspondences" similar to those expressed in the lost book, as the narrator remarks:

> **There are handmade notices around the city, xeroxes, broadsides, posters. I often see them in front of the main Post Office. A lot of them are religious. Sometimes they're about things that happened to someone, about how the Post Office is holding their checks, or somebody in government has it out for them, detailed connections between agencies, doctors, officials. Others are harder to figure out. Something about reading clouds for faces and messages, systems of numbers, patents, theories of electricity, science and business schemes. I used to read these broadsides, and whenever I saw handwritten messages I read them too. I might have been looking for clues, or maybe it Just got to be a habit.**

These scenes of writing locate the lost book within a larger category of urban textuality that seizes on urban space as a forum for "disruptive" expression and critique. Wild conspiracy theories, personal crusades, unhinged metaphysical speculations: each of these forms of writing addresses a presumed urban audience and exhibits a particular discursive impulse, the desire to make connections, to wrest meaning from the flux of urban experience. It is an impulse that the film's narrator comes to share as he reads the handwritten texts he encounters. In number of instances these objects bear the material

traces of human interaction: a notice reads "Ring the Bell," with a crude "Fuck You" scrawled beneath it; a note reading "Elevator out of service," "Always" inserted between the lines in another hand. In addition, several of these handwritten forms of textuality are explicitly commercial in nature, including marked-up lottery tickets and scratch games, a sign inviting consumers to "Get loose and shop," and a note that reads, "To Mom may you get lots of money Love Kisha."

A final category of texts in the film are architectural, signs on buildings with degraded, palimpsestic, or missing typography, and while these are not obviously forms of public writing in the same sense as the various handwritten messages in the film, they also suggest the way in which the contemporary city is also characterized by rapid, large-scale spatial changes on the level of real estate that contribute centrally to the alienation and dislocation of the individual. This connection is made explicit near the end of the film when Cohen's narrator remarks:

I can't tell why one place feels like another, what ties parts of the city together. I can't even remember what buildings used to be here just a month or so ago. I know that everything can't be important. A business card printed for one reason and dropped for another, the measured distance from the building to the standpipe, signs hidden behind other signs on the sides of buildings.

Here, the shifting textuality of the city is seen to extend in scale from the discarded object—the dropped business card that stands in for all of the textual 'leavings' of everyday capitalist exchange—to the buying and selling of urban space itself. It is a trajectory that could be said to trace the expansion and abstraction of capitalism from modernity to postmodernity, from industrial modes of production rooted in business and manufacture to more abstract modes of production like land speculation, finance, and the stock market.

This trajectory thus brings us back to the question of how **Lost Book Found**, and specifically its attention to the materiality of writing practices and the book form as a way of grasping the complexity of contemporary urban space, can be seen to contribute to a contemporary aesthetic of cognitive mapping. As Jameson has argued in a recent article, land speculation, along with finance capital, represents one of the most abstract forms of postmodern investment and can be seen to have shaped the repurposing of space in New York City over the course of the twentieth century, during which large areas have been converted from manufacturing and small businesses to office space for financial, insurance, and real estate companies.[11] While his subject is architecture, and Rockefeller Center in particular, the connection Jameson makes between "the spatial history of New York" and postmodern modes of investment allows us to locate the instances of cognitive mapping in **Lost Book Found**, both the peculiar taxonomies of the lost book and their effect on the film's narrator's experience of city space, within the problematic posed by Jameson's aesthetic of cognitive mapping. That is, the sense of placelessness and dislocation repeatedly expressed by the narrator of **Lost Book Found** can be seen as a response to the volatility of an urban fabric constantly being reshaped by modes of investment and exchange that can occasion the rapid refashioning of entire city blocks. This phenomena is mentioned when Cohen's narrator recalls returning to the city after a period of absence:

[11] Jameson, Fredric, "The Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism, and Land Speculation," in *The Cultural Turn*. New York: Verso, 1998. 167-168.

When I moved back there were whole areas I didn't recognize ... Blocks of buildings had given way to new office towers, but a lot of them were unable to find tenants. It was while I was driving in midtown looking at some of the new buildings that another one of the book's headings came back to me, and that was the phrase: 'Glass is a liquid.'

Cohen's narrator repeatedly expresses this sense of exasperation and dislocatedness; he "can't even remember what buildings used to be here just a month or so ago," and remarks that the categories of lost book "began to seem more and more useless and crazy, the idea that anyone thought that they could connect so many things, that there was any kind of order."

But despite this sense of bewilderment, in his attention to the materiality of writing, locations of low-capital exchange, and the book form the film's narrator does, I want to argue, begin to suggest something on which an aesthetic of cognitive mapping can find purchase. In the final moments of the film the narrator explains the way in which the remembered categories in the lost book and his subsequent attention to the numerous forms of textuality in the city have forever changed his experience of urban space:

Mark Owens

STATEMENT

It's ten years since my job as a pushcart vendor. I pass over the streets of the city and I still find myself asking: who wrote the lost book? Sometimes I still hear their voices making lists in my head. I walk into a hallway and see twenty other hallways; one store window becomes fifty store windows; one store for rent, one thousand stores for rent. I look and see a scrap of paper, face down—a weight loss program, a job application, a torn up letter. I keep seeing other pieces of paper, and I have to turn them over, too. I'm riding in an elevator and the numbers keep on going, past the number of floors in the building, past the prices of the discount sale, past the numbers of this week's lottery.

If not precisely a vision of coherence, at this moment Cohen's narrator does articulate a sense of spatial interconnection, a multiplication and condensation—"one store for rent, one thousand stores for rent"—that reverses the "thousands" of partial views available from the office window at the opening of the film. These scraps of paper, flyers, signs, and textual ephemera, like the commodities in the discount sales and sidewalk bazaars that populate the ever-shifting urban landscape, are those "relics of commerce" that form the material texture of our own embattled, postmodern urban spaces, connecting them. What Cohen's narrator describes is a kind of urban hypertext whose reading requires a new kind of exponential thinking, an expansion and proliferation along the material byproducts of postmodern capitalism.

Through the figure of the flaneur Benjamin looked to similar "relics" and "artifacts," the recently outmoded, kitsch commodities of urban industrialism at the turn of the century, for their residual revolutionary potential, for the ways in which they held within their very material forms a kind of utopian, collective wish. In the so-called postindustrial era of

the late twentieth century, in which cybernetic modes of investment and globalized commerce appear to be displacing more traditional kinds of exchange, Cohen's close attention to spaces of street-level commerce seizes on the city as a space of public writing and as a text that is written *by* the public. The collective potential of this sense of urban textuality is glimpsed, I want to suggest, in the closing moments of the film when Cohen moves from scenes of the city, in which individuals only ever appear as parts of the crowd—either moving past the camera or from behind, gazing into store windows—to a series of thirteen "portraits" shot in front of Madison Square Garden. These images follow the narrator's final question, "Who wrote the Lost book?", and the series of portraits suggests that *anyone* could have written it. In this way the future of the city, its inevitable, ongoing authorship by those who walk its streets every day, is left an open and enabling question.

It is appropriate, then, that **Lost Book Found** concludes with a return to the street fisher, who is seen at beginning of the film pulling something up from a subway grating. In the final seconds of the film this object is retrieved and handed to the camera. The camera cuts to a round metal tag with "CABLE NO. N.Y.TEL.CO." inscribed on its surface, lit in the same dim light in which the lost book is glimpsed earlier in the film. It is a nondescript bit of urban detritus whose inscribed surface nevertheless points to its origins in the massive system of global communications networks administered by the New York Telephone Company, better known as Bell Atlantic. The street fisher's open hand is the only gesture out to the viewer in **Lost Book Found**, and thus might stand in for Cohen's own gesture in making the film. Shot largely in the outmoded medium of Super-8 and available only on video—itself an increasingly endangered medium—the film offers a vision of the postmodern city as an interconnected fabric of transitory texts whose materiality might help us begin to grasp our relationship as individuals to the infinitely complex spatial dynamics that shape contemporary culture.

The author would like to thank Jem Cohen for his support of this project and Paul Elliman for his example. This essay also appears in the pages of the "Words in Space" special issue of the journal *Visible Language*, 34.1 pp. 34-55.

Preface

Project Overview

My thesis essay, included here as a separate volume, was drafted in response to a "film-as-book" assignment in my first semester at Yale. Subsequently, the film, *Lost Book Found*—and particularly its connection to Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project*—has served as a kind of limit text for my investigations. As I hope the thesis essay makes clear, when read alongside Benjamin and several of the fundamental critical texts on contemporary urban space the film opens up a constellation of terms, tactics, and concepts that are immensely suggestive for a critically engaged graphic design practice.

Very generally, the work collected here addresses the primary terms that organize my reading of the film—'writing,' 'city,' and 'space'—as flexible and expanded categories. Thus, 'writing' in the city can come to include both objects and moving trajectories, as well as signage and textual ephemera. Similarly, what counts as 'the city' or 'the urban' can come to include the new urbanism of the airport, as well as the streets of the Manhattan grid. Bringing these expanded terms into contact, the projects that follow thus address the construction of the contemporary city as simultaneously global, material, and spatial—these three general themes organize the groupings of works that follow.

In our present cultural moment, the globalization of finance and the spread of information technologies is rapidly dematerializing our urban spaces, a cultural shift that finds an important echo in the transformations that Benjamin traces in his writings on nineteenth century Paris. For Benjamin, large scale socioeconomic transformations are legible in the materiality of the discarded urban fragment or commodity, a ruin that serves as an allegory of far-reaching cultural change. So too, the work collected here often siezes on the discarded or almost outmoded object—the subway token, coffee cup, discarded computer, or crumbling office building—as an index of dematerializing and globalizing urban forces, what Fredric Jameson has termed "cognitive mapping." Alongside these concerns, the work also insists on the transformative potential of specific spatial practices, especially walking in the city, an idea that is deeply endebted to the writings of the French historian and critic Michel de Certeau.

Finally, the projects tend to address these issues by bringing vernacular and documentary modes (found objects, photographs, and idiosyncratic personal gestures like handwriting or walking) into tension with seemingly 'official' urban visual languages, including municipal signage and the cold, sans serif typography of mid-century corporate modernism. So doing, the work attempts to offer these monolithic visual idioms up for recoding, performing in the visual realm the kinds of destabilizations that are legible in the projects when seen as a whole.



Mark Owens
STATEMENT

Do you feel that your thesis informs your work today?

In its most basic outlines my thesis describes two components—a selection of design projects and a parallel body of critical writing—and certainly that has continued to characterize my work as a whole. In this sense I would say that my thesis continues to inform my work in the form of a methodology that moves between making and writing. My specific focus, then, on urbanism and "scriptive" modes of navigating the city has certainly expanded, and if anything become more wide-ranging and associative.

Did it inform your first job out of school? Do you feel as though it's more relevant now than it was when you graduated, or vice versa?

Like a lot of Yale design MFAs, after school I moved to New York and worked full time at a number of small studios and freelance. At the same time, I was fortunate to find outlets for my writing, most importantly the Journal Dot Dot Dot, which was thanks to Paul Elliman, who introduced me to Stuart Bailey. This was crucial in allowing me to maintain a space for writing and critical reflection alongside my professional work. Right now I am working on a book, so for me at the moment that seems particularly relevant.

If you could go back and adjust your thesis, would you? How so?

The process of research and discovery central to my thesis was an invaluable experience that I wouldn't want to change. I graduated in 2000, so I think the work itself shows all of the hallmarks of that moment and what was thinkable at the time, which was just before the first Internet bubble burst, before LuLu, before blogs, and before the typographic turn the field began to take around that time. If I could go back I think I would have wanted to see myself taking more risks formally and working out a more durable form for the thesis book itself, but that is perhaps something that is more possible now, given the rise in self-publishing and that a critical mass of inspiring design work is more visible and accessible online. The thesis describes a tension in the work between official graphic languages and

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more subversive, or vernacular impulses, and I think that productive tension is still legible in my approach to design today, perhaps even more so.

Is there a part that still sticks with you, and other parts that seem irrelevant now? Which parts?

My thesis essay centers around the Jem Cohen short film Lost Book Found (1996), and it is something that I still show to students—it is a near-perfect meditation on writing in the city, and gives a portrait of a pre-Guliani, pre-9/11 New York City that really isn't there any more. Given everything we've come to know about neoliberalism, financial speculation, and real estate, I think my reading of the film in the essay has plenty of contemporary resonance.

David Reinfurt

Temporary Thesis

Graphic design obsesses on the moment — a perfect composition for the one perfect instant. But design produces artifacts and every physical thing changes. Most of the time is spent in making and remaking it. This is the practice of graphic design.

I call my thesis temporary to articulate a shift in focus from the designed object to the act of graphic design. Instead of projects, I usually end up with stories. This book tells the story about two years I spent in the graduate graphic design program at Yale University. It emphasizes the intermediate moments of my work, a catalog of unequal ideas and partly true stories. It is a sketchbook for a practice that is always becoming.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

Application for Graduate Study

Design is a two-way street. I am interested in design projects where context, interaction and environment extend the work of the designer. Two-way design means that what happens after the design is produced completes and imparts additional meaning. I'm frustrated with the idea of the designer as dictator, producing one correct solution. With new roles being performed by graphic designers, we stand to learn a lot from softer design disciplines such as landscape architecture, urban planning or interaction design where the design isn't realized until acted upon, lived with or changed.

Sampled from a Text by Stewart Brand

Louis Sullivan said, "It is the law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that life is recognizable in its expressions, that the form ever follows function...so near a thing to us that we cannot perceive the shape, form, outward expression, design or whatever we may choose, of the tall office building should in the very nature of things follow the functions of the building, and that where the function does not change, the form is not to change."

Sullivan's form-follows-function misled a century of architects into believing that they could really anticipate function. First we shape our buildings, then they shape us, then we shape them again—ad infinitum. Function reforms form, perpetually. We imagine architecture is permanent. And so our buildings thwart us. Because they discount time, they misuse time.

The word building contains the double reality. It means both the action of the verb build and that which is built—both verb and noun, both the action and the result. Whereas architecture may strive to be permanent, a building is always building and rebuilding.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

Photography, Departure and Arrival Times

Photography traditionally concerns itself with capturing, recording and printing the instant. The one moment where the composition is compelling, the elements suggest a story, or the juxtapositions are pronounced. Once printed and presented, the image loses a sense of time. This compression is the essence of traditional photography.

Last week, I bought a book of photographs by Wolfgang Tillmans. The book is a record of his encounters with the Concorde. It is a smaller format and contains no text. It is simply full bleed photographs on the right hand page. The photos are of the Concorde taking off or landing at Heathrow airport. Individually, they are not formally compelling. Sequentially, they are amazing.

The photographs always include the Concorde, but rarely is it the subject. Shot from different vantage points around the airport and city of London, they are a distinct record of the city. A portion of a street sign pointing to Hounslow, a British Rail train in one shot and not in the next, an unidentified overpass of worn brick and painted blue steel girder are the images that accumulate through the book. The presence of the Concorde becomes an excuse to make these snapshots and brings with it the implications of its mission to conquer time and space through supersonic flight. The book becomes a record of Tillmans' repeated experience and an articulate account of a time and place.

The chance composition of each shot is triggered by an external event. The scenes are everyday places including a parking lot, a field, a train platform. Very similar images are repeated with only a change in the plane's location. The foreign presence of the futuristic jet in these common landscapes creates an arbitrary narrative device to get from page to page. It is the combination of these qualities that makes a book that is both excruciatingly ordinary and tangibly exciting.

The local time is 12:46

At thirty-three thousand feet, time misbehaves. Maybe it is the thin atmosphere. Time carries on in lunging, jerky movements. Three hours pass in an instant; and the two minutes between meal service and drink service stretches to an hour and fifteen. I am attuned to the glacial rates of passing clouds. Totally relaxed, the polished metal surfaces, crisp colors and hurr of the engine conspire. If not for the reassuring cocoon of my economy seat, I would forget who and where I am.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT





Sampled from "A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time" by J.B. Jackson

Ask the average American of the older generation what he or she most clearly remembers and cherishes about their home town and its events and the answer will rarely be the public square, the monuments, the patriotic celebrations. What come to mind are such nonpolitical, nonarchitectural places and events as commencement, a revival service in a tent, a traditional football rivalry game, a country fair, and certain family celebrations. For all of these have those qualities that I associate with a sense of place: a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on a shared experience.

Most of us, I suspect, without giving much thought to the matter, would say that a sense of place, a sense of being at home in a town or city, grows as we become accustomed to it and learn to know its peculiarities. It is my own belief that a sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time.

In our urban environment, which is constantly undergoing irreversible changes, a cyclical sense of time, the regular recurrence of events and celebrations, is what gives us reassurance and a sense of unity and continuity, eventually producing those spaces and structures we now think so essential. We attach too much importance to art and architecture in producing an awareness of our belonging to a city or a country, when what we actually share is a sense of time.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

Professor of Latent History

I'd like to be Professor of Latent History. Every thing and every place has times past, present and future and stories fixed to these. All that is required is to trigger the story through the right intervention. I'd like to know how to do this, what to align, who to assemble. Latency is a promise for everything to be revealed at an instant. This potential gives the present power and it makes the past tangible. I will be attuned to this and reveal the latent in everyday experience.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

From The Progress Wall

"Put your imprint on the blueprint! Let's build that dreamhouse. Build for today, build for the future." —JCC fundraising flyer, 1948.

The New Haven Jewish Community Center was built on this site in 1952... The two groups intitiated plans for a new building in 1925. The Pioneer Club was formed with 100 members each pledging $100 per year for ten years. Flyers were circulated, pledges collected, and fundraising events held.

The Oak Street neighborhood was a center of Jewish life in New Haven. It was a rich mix of small businesses, residences, and a vibrant street life. The site was chosen because of proximity to this neighborhood.

"Don't Let Progress Stop! Today, new buildings are rising where rat-ridden slums stood just two short years ago. There's still a big job ahead." —Flyer to re-elect mayor Richard Lee, 1958

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

By the late 1950's, as the JCC was thriving, New Haven was implementing a radical new strategy called Urban Renewal. Amidst the rhetoric of progress, neighborhoods were cleared for freeways, parking garages, and high rises. The Oak Street Connector freeway project was intended to improve access to the city for a growing suburban population. The Oak Street neighborhood was removed to make way for the freeway that now dead ends in a parking garage.

In 1986, the Jewish Community Center left. Most of the Jewish population now lived in the suburbs, parking was scarce, and there were safety concerns downtown. The JCC relocated to Woodbridge, leaving this building vacant for ten years. Yale University bought this building in 1996. 1156 Chapel Street is scheduled to reopen in 2000.

Repetition

Exit apartment, turn right. Pedal down Orange Street. Right on Pearl St, left at Lincoln. Ride straight down Lincoln. Cross Trumbull. Follow sidewalk to Audubon St. Right on Audubon to Whitney Avenue. Turn left. Right onto Grove St towards Sterling-Sheffield-Strathcona Hall. Left on College St and continue to Main Quad. Turn right down the footpath. Ride up ramp towards Sterling Memorial Library. Left on High St, cross Elm. Right on connecting path, left on York St. Turn at the Daily News. Ride straight into studio.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

Badlandscapes

Tonight, I will be speaking in my self-appointed role as Professor of Latent History in the Department of Temporal Studies. I am working on my temporary thesis on the multiple times of graphic design. This evening I will present my current research project — a collection of landscape photographs that I believe hold great promise for my graphic design work. *May I have the first slide please.*

We begin at Badlands National Park, South Dakota.

The term landscape came from the 17th century "landskip" meaning a painting or drawing of a countryside scene. Later, it came to mean a particular tract of land that could be seen from one point of view, as if it were a picture. I'll use the most persistent definition, "a portion of the earth's surface that can be comprehended at a glance."

It is impossible to separate a landscape and the stories that have formed it. In Landscape Narratives, Matthew Potteiger says, "They accumulate as layers of history...and inhere in the materials and processes of the landscape. In various ways, stories 'take place.'"

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

Stories physically form the land. The story of Osiris in Egypt as told by Simon Schama is an example. The myth holds that Osiris' amputated penis thrown into the Nile resulted in great fertilization of the surrounding land. This led to the building of the obelisks of ancient Egypt and then Rome. They were constructed as physical symbols to invoke the myth of Osiris and encourage a fertile soil. I've found that the histories of a landscape provide as useful a map of the terrain as the cartographer's best efforts.

If stories are embedded in landscape, it follows that we can read a landscape. Looking at a canyon in Dead Horse Point State Park, we read the banded layers of rock as a story about the carving action of the Colorado River over time. In a landscape of London, we can read the prominence of St. Paul's, Hawksmoor's church spires and Canary Wharf tower to construct our own fiction of the building of the city.

The instinct to record these stories in a picture is ancient. In the American landscape, Martin Johnson Heade painted the same landscapes of the North-east repeatedly at different times. Edweard Muybridge is well known for his catalogues of motion, where he attempted to record time photographically. He also made panaramic photographs of the city where he worked. His

photographs of San Francisco shot from California Street hill record a particular moment in history. They also reveal layers of building, evidence of stories. What was he up to? Was he again photographing time?

I would say yes. Dale Ritter, a geologist with the Desert Research Institute, would agree. He says that the landscape image, "is merely a fleeting glimpse... It hints at what it might have been at some earlier time and teases us into believing that we can predict what it will be in the future. But behind the conceptual façade is the nagging realization that it never was and never will be precisely the same as we see it now."

Next slide please.

This is the first image of my collection. I think you will notice similarities across these photographs. There are only basic spatial cues. They don't have one subject. They could be called unremarkable. But I wouldn't agree.

These landscape photographs are simultaneously blank and loaded. They are open, yet they command us to mine their latent histories — to imagine a story about how they came to look as they do now, to know that we won't learn of all of the stories told on their terrain, to feel the potential energy of stories yet to be performed. A single image implies multiple times. They are temporal. This is why I am interested in them.

Other visual artists have picked up on these cues and made work using landscape as the canvas and time as the medium. Richard Long's artwork is his walks — lasting several days, he makes marks that record his time. At Roden Crater, James Turrell bought and modified a volcanic crater in northern Arizona. Walter De Maria placed a matrix of lightning rods in a field in New Mexico.

What happens when I exploit time in my graphic design work?
I make flyers that live a short time.
I revel in the process.
I shift seamlessly from present to past to future.
I arrange forms that suggest rearrangement.
I call attention to the time it takes to make.
I suggest temporary installations.
I might call the product a performance.
I might call myself a choreographer.

We return now to the Badlands.

Places Where Time Stands Still

International Design Magazine Design Awards Annual. International Design Magazine Interactive Design Awards Annual. Communication Arts Design Annual. Communication Arts Interactive Design Annual. Print Magazine Regional Design Annual. Publish Magazine Makeover. How Magazine Design Annual. The One Show. British Design and Art Direction Awards. The American Center for Design One Hundred Show. Ad infinitum.

These sacred texts were my indoctrination into the world of graphic design. I marvelled over the elegant solutions presented on 100 pound text weight coated ultra-fine satin. I imagined that one day, I too, would become immortal.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT





Paint by Numbers

Paint by Numbers exercises offer insight to how the professional graphic designer thinks about color. Painters mix colors by eye from tubes of paint, but designers assign colors. We even give them numbers, like the 3 of grass green in a Paint by Numbers landscape. We attribute colors to things to create meaning — to relate to something else inside the work, differentiate from something inside the work, or to refer to something outside of the work. By specifying colors by number, such as Pantone 643 or the 3 of grass green, we hope to gain control of the appearance of these colors when they are used. Of course, not all of the 3's in a Paint By Number landscape do not turn out the same.

In the first 3, the paint is new. By the 26th 3, the paint is finished and a dried up green marker has been substituted. Likewise, the carefully specified Pantone 643 of John Deere is not always the same, as much as the graphic designer might dictate that it is. The brochure gets old, collects fingerprints or lies in the sun for a week. The Pantone 643 uniform becomes Pantone 647 after several washes. The tractor painter was hungover. Time changes color.

We can lament the breakdown of our carefully designed system. But we also can use it. We can guess how the system might evolve and enjoy being wrong. We can design a structure that allows restructuring. We can react with instant acts of design as things change and we can be delighted by what we didn't plan for.

Potential Energy (The Art of the Proposal)

"Claes Oldenburg's giant lipsticks were jokes that knew how to behave: they were never intended for the landscape of London. They stayed where they belonged, in the notebook, on the gallery wall. You were free to imagine them, you didn't have to suffer them every day of your life."

Proposals are a category of making that is undervalued. The potential energy vested in them is more satisfying than the formal arrangement of a realized project. I am particularly attracted to this kind of design. It is design that is not yet.

Graphic designer Karel Martens shared a proposal for the Dutch Euro coin with me. It was a 12 page book approximately 5 x 7". The book began with an image of current Dutch coins and the Queen who is featured on them. It then presented several iterations of the Queen's head rendered with typography. The proposal concludes with a tour de force of acetate overlays that creates the dimensional form of the proposed coin. After weeks of political machinations, the proposal was rejected. The current coin design will be used on the new Euros.

David Reinfurt

STATEMENT

Nonetheless, when I do see the Dutch Euro, I will see two coins at once; two simultaneous and equally important images: the present reality of the coin and the proposed scheme that Karel showed me. I will be able to enjoy the fruits of Karel's design efforts without a single coin ever being manufactured. The important part is that I will be able to understand at the site for which is was intended. And after seeing the proposal, my experience with the Dutch Euro will be forever changed.

This is the Art of the Proposal. It is the potential energy embodied that never needs to be realized. A proposal contains the possibility of radical transformation of a site not possible with a realized project. This is because the proposal exists simultaneously with the reality of the actual place. We are gifted with the current state of the site while suggesting a radical shift. The invisible quality of a proposal is exactly its strength. Economical, scaleable, possible and effective. The proposal is a powerful artifact particularly suited for the skills of the graphic designer.

Learning from The Washington Monument

The monument of severe simplicity erected to honor the first president of the United States offers a story about the use and transformation of historical context. As uncovered in Badlandscapes, the built form of the obelisk was borne of the Egyptian myth of Osiris' amputated penis. The Washington Monument recovered this physical motif, but radically transformed its function. Unlike the dense collection of symbols and inscriptions on the exterior of the obelisks on which it was based, the Washington Monument was left resolutely blank. Visitors weren't asked to read the exterior markings of the obelisk, but to enter through a door at the base and ascend the Monument in an elevator or by staircase. In his book from the Nearby History series, Gerald Danzer examines the Washington Monument. "Here the new order for the ages was chiseled into the landscape. The monument, turned inside out, established a new type of inscription on the landscape itself."

The Monument also offers a lesson about a formal design process. The drama of the form and its placement at the center of L'Enfant's plan for the new capital structured the development and navigation of the city. Its visual presence at the center (along with building codes) suggested the forms that the city would pro-duce. Today, distance and direction from the landmark can be easily discerned. The image of the city is tangible.

The Washington Monument suggests a design strategy that leverages time: (1) Identify an element with abundant presence and a severely simple form. (2) Add other elements over time. Let them sort out their positions in reaction to the the fixed element. (3) The primary element then disappears to reveal the order that it has created.

A Parade on Lincoln Street

Riding into the studio on my Supergoose BMX bike, I have been amazed this past week with the colorful parade I follow down Lincoln Street. The colors of fall leaves make me think about the cyclical return of the seasons.

Linear time is a distinctly western idea. There are other cultures without a defined concept of history or of the future except in the mythologies that are useful in explaining why things are how they are now. These mythologies of the present are radically different from the carefully constructed and canonized histories that western culture is founded on.

J.B. Jackson writes about two physical landscapes that reflect distinct cultural concepts of time. The Pueblos of New Mexico lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle anchored in a space surrounded by mountains on all sides. The arrival of summer meant that it was time to take shelter in the stacked clay dwellings. Spring was time for hunting. The only history that was useful were creation myths for the mountains. A cyclical concept of time dominated.

Jackson offers the landscape of the northeastern United States as a counter. It is punctuated with monuments to a detailed past. The history is carefully constructed and canonized. Monuments are commandments to learn the history lest you should repeat it. It is a landscape defined by a cultural emphasis on linear time.

How would a graphic design shaped by a cyclical concept of time differ from a graphic design of linear time? The changing seasons are a guide. A cyclical graphic design might describe a clear formal structure, but without a beginning a middle or an end. It would be a circle that could be seen as a whole from anywhere inside of it. It might suggest a process that is repetitive or a story that is flat. Done right, it could be heroically boring.

Plagiarism

I've never understood the moral stigma attached to plagiarism. Maybe this is because my chosen profession relies on the principle. It rarely acknowledges this, preferring the fallacy of creating a new solution each time. When an old style is reused, it is often done in a self-consciously new manner.

The difference between plagiarism and appropriation is important. Appropriation is a post-modern concept of removing an object from its original context, emptying out its meaning and pouring in a new one. This is very appealing to graphic designers, who believe that this is their provence. The loss of history inherent in the process seems wasteful.

Images and ideas in their original context carried a wealth of meanings. For example, the images of Modern graphic design such as Helvetica type, white space and the color red were cues to a larger ideology that included ideas about honesty of materials, reductivism and optimism. They lived in a context when the Future was exciting, when changes were happening, when the right layout could solve social problems. These visual cues were appropriated in club flyers in the early nineties that used Modernist moves in an ironic way to promote underground parties. These same visual tropes have been appropriated since to sell magazines and khaki pants.

But the look of modernism can also be plagiarized. In doing so, not only do you get the seductive visual style, but also, the accumulated history of these images. Plagiarism implies an acceptance of the sequential nature of everything.

In the Festival of Plagiarism, British artist Stewart Home defines plagiarism as "the conscious manipulation of pre-existing elements in the creation of aesthetic works." This radical idea of plagiarism runs in opposition to graphic design. It can be attacked as lazy and reactionary, yet that's not true; by recognizing the cyclical nature of the industry and its intimate links to fashion, we are free to sample things that have worked well before. We then acquire the historical and cultural context of the original to use today.





36 Slides

"No skateboarding, rollerblading, or recreational skating."
"1963, Skidmoore, Owings and Merrill, Architects."
"Your freedom and mine cannot be separated."

At the heart of Yale University, Beinecke Plaza is a densely written public space. Inscriptions: the signature architecture of the rare book library, Isamu Noguchi sculpture garden, Alexander Calder mobile, a flagpole on axis with a church to the north and library south, the relentless grid of the pavement. Wait. Look closer. Another text can be deciphered.

A strange set of marks offer clues to a not-so-ancient history — skateboarders, slides, police, a crime scene. The Plaza is a magnet for skaters. Great paving and ledges the perfect height for rail slides. Local police and university officials didn't think so. You can't skate here anymore.

Thirty six photographic slides were made on December 1, 1998 in an attempt to record this history. On December 2, 1998, a temporary installation was written on the site in chalk outlines. A website was posted as a record of their traces.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

The Myths of Jeffrey Vallance

Across the street from the Laurie Anderson show that I had come to see was a far more interesting gallery show. Comprised of roughly thirty 18 x 24" collages of drawings, photographs, hand written stories and colored lines connecting them all, the work of Jeffrey Vallance drew me in. At first the formal similarities of the work tricked me into thinking that was it. But, as I began to decipher the stories, strange drawings of Blinky the Hen and photographs of a hen burial at a West Hollywood cemetery, I started to understand. The visual style adopted was mostly a face given to the real work which is a story about a process. In this case, it was the purchase of a medium-sized chicken at a grocery, the close examination of it, the creation of stories around it and the ritualized burial of Blinky, the Friendly Hen.

The formal cue that drew me into these stories were the lines that connected the drawings, photographs and stories. Visually he suggests what a closer read reveals: connections between apparently disparate and formally different things. It is this mythology that fascinates me.

Vallance does this same thing again in his writing projects. One such project was a visit to Tonga to meet the King. Armed with a letter of introduction from the mayor of Los Angeles, Vallance writes about the set of events that follow his arrival in Tonga. He manages to reconstitute a series of fairly ordinary events and cultural stories into a compelling narrative about the place. In addition, he does this while still making his visual work—sketches, carvings and paintings. The visual work becomes a vehicle for the real story of his time spent making it.

Note from a Choreographer

John Gamble, Professor of Dance at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, can be a role model for my design practice.

"I would try to keep in mind that my role is to shape a little bit of what is there, to stimulate its growth, and to expect my design to be changed by time... I would create drama. I would judge the work with my body, feeling the power and emotion in the movement that is implied. If my design evoked a sense of unity and depth, it would be judged a beginning. If, in time, it made me want to dance, I would judge it a success."

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

Context and the Bags of Redemption

Clear vinyl ziploc bags silkscreened with red ink appeared around campus two weeks ago. The bags announced a series of Open Studios in the art school. Sculpture, Tuesday November 16, 7–9 pm. Painting and printmaking, Thursday, November 18. Photography, November 18.

Empty and antiseptic plastic with roughhewn silkscreened type, the bags were foreign to the usual paper posters, 11x17" and 8 1/2 x11" posted at these locations. They were busting with potential energy. A litany of visual cues suggests that when these things were first posted, the design process was just beginning. One clue could be found in the clear vinyl material and the form of the bag. A container, even a transparent one; this was certainly a nod to the idea that the contents of the bag are more important than the bags themselves. In fact, the bag quickly disappears as it accumulates things. Another clue was the contrast between the crafted and tactile silkscreened type and the machine aesthetic of the bag. The type intuited that the bag was to be used. It was to be filled up, to be made messy.

David Reinfurt
STATEMENT

Since they have appeared, each bag teaches a lesson in context. The bag on the graphic design studio door quickly filled with scraps of paper, Poland Spring cups, a nice looking lightbulb box, an announcement for a Men at Work show, and a half a baguette. The bag on 215 Park Street attracted some other flyers for an open studio in sculpture. A color print of the bag announcing undergrad sculpture open studios referenced the actual bag. These recreated bags ended up inside of the originals. The bags have anchored and activated walls and doors around campus. They are alive and they are incomplete. And that is what yields them their particular power.

ORG

Today is February 17,1999, 11:56 PM, Welcome to ORG. Office of Research in Geophysics. Online Realsize Geography. Organisation for Realtime Graphics. On Rhythm and Graphic design. Observing and Recording Group. Of Riding and Graffiti. Orgasm and Rejection in General.

ORG is an org of orgs.

It is a series of plausible online entities that I make about things I like. The first org is the Office of Research in Geophysics, a center dedicated to the study and representation of the wind. The org appears online with a fully defined web presence accessible through ORG's org, www.010.org.

ORG is a project to draw a map at 100% scale. In Monuments of Passaic, Robert Smithson describes the mission succinctly.

"If the future is out of date and old fashioned, then I had been in the future. I had been on a planet that had a map drawn over it, and a rather imperfect map at that. A sidereal map marked up with lines the size of streets, and squares and blocks the size of buildings. At any moment my feet were apt to fall through the cardboard ground."

BEFORE AFTER THE DEMISE PARTY
Yale University School of Art
Commencement Address
May 23, 2011

Thank you. This talk will be about 15-minutes.

I'm going to start by describing 30 seconds from a 12-minute film made in 1976. The film is by British structuralist filmmaker John Smith and called THE GIRL CHEWING GUM. Perhaps some of you know it, but if not it can be easily found on the internet, *after* I finish talking, preferably.

First, I'll set up the clip. THE GIRL CHEWING GUM is a 16mm black-and-white film shot across a busy London street in one take on a typical day. About 2 minutes in, the camera begins to slowly pan up from street-level, across the storefront and to the 2nd story roof where a public clock is mounted. You hear John Smith's voice-over, "instruct-ing" the camera:

"Hold it . . . And I want the CLOCK to move gently towards me. Stop. Now I want the long hand to move at the rate of one revolution every hour and the short hand to move at the rate of one revolution every 12 hours. Now -- two pigeons fly across and everything comes up again until the girl chewing gum walks across from the left."

So, maybe you get some idea of what's going on -- John Smith simply filmed 12 minutes of a busy London street, and then went back

after-the-fact and added his voice-over which sounds to be the voice of the film's director instructing the actors, camera, etc. but which is really only a post-facto description of the film as it was originally shot. It is a kind of *reverse narration* that pre-empts the action and seems to conjure the street scene into being. It reminds me of an idea that an artist friend shared recently that every narrative film is both a fiction (the story being told) and a documentary (about the making of the film). Simple.

When giving a talk about past work, I've often found myself thinking that things sound much smoother, more coherent, calculated and intentional in retelling than they actually were at the time. This isn't a big surprise. We very often (always?) don't understand what we are doing when we are doing it. Søren Kierkergaard neatly sums it up (roughly paraphrased) -- We live forwards, but we understand backwards.

This is why I am so taken with THE GIRL CHEWING GUM -- it suggests another possibility, a backwards chronology where events are literally produced by speaking, by telling them to happen. It's a seductive fiction, and also very much unlike how things work in real life. TIME moves simply in one direction, an arrow that commands a continuous and very limited present moment. This present, according to William James and psychological studies at the end of the 19th century, is somewhere around 7 seconds on either side of this precise instant -- *now*. (Repeat) Meanwhile, also according to James, everything that falls either side of this ever-evolving present is fiction, a bundle of nerve channels, ideas, impressions that sit in a less-than-stable manner in the bumps and valleys of your brain as memories (of the past) and predictions (about the future).

So, if you'll indulge me, now I'd also like to do an exercise in *reverse narration* and conjure a point in my post-Yale life almost exactly equidistant from receiving my MFA in Graphic Design in May of 1999 and speaking here today in 2011.

//

David Reinfurt
RESPONSE

On April 27, 2006 I organized a closing party at O-R-G, my then-graphic design studio at 315 West 39th Street in midtown Manhattan. I'd set up O-R-G just after leaving New Haven and now this closing event was to be some kind of cross between a wake and a going-out-of-business sale. I called the evening AFTER THE DEMISE PARTY, which was a direct nod to THE DEMISE PARTY organized by Whole Earth Catalog founder and editor Stewart Brand in 1974. In case you don't know who Stewart Brand is, last Friday's New York Times describes him as a visionary techno-hippie artist. Not quite, but close enough.

For my party, I invited the loosely affiliated group of collaborators, friends, part-time employees, assistants, and those willing to play

along to come to the studio that I had run for the last six years and to leave with whatever they wanted. My intention was to give away every single thing from that small space back to some of the people who had helped make it work. This included desks, table lights, a giant bookshelf of books, all of my CDs, posters, printed ephemera, work samples, carpet, flat files, computers, monitors, keyboards, mice, a portable fog machine. Over the lifespan of O-R-G, I had regular events, so there was a committed crowd set to come that night. The email invitation that I sent out borrowed some language from Stewart Brand in his description of the original DEMISE PARTY, which I repurposed to describe my AFTER THE DEMISE PARTY. I'd like to read part of that email invitation now (it starts with Mr. Brand):

"It was never meant to last, only to review the existing tools, provide access, bring some people together, then disappear. After five years and four issues, we published THE LAST ^ UPDATED WHOLE EARTH CATALOG -- what had began as an idea on an airplane over Nebraska in March, 1968 to compile a collection of links to alternative media and resources, was a success. Over one and half million copies of the latest catalog were produced in fourteen printings. And then this other notion glimmered. Keep the job, finish the original assignment, and then stop.

How to Make Money was not the design problem. (I'd heard and bought Ken Kesey's advice that you don't make money by making money: you have that in mind early on, but then you forget it and concentrate entirely on good product; the money comes to pass.) The problem was How to Generate a Low-Maintenance High-Yield Self-Sustaining Critical Information Service. Our stopping is primarily an economic experiment. Rather than do the usual succession things we prefer to just cease supply, let demand create its own new sources. Our hope is that those sources will be more diverse and better than we have been or could have been if we continued."

(Now me.)

We've been here in the studio at 315 West 39th Street for over five years and now it's time to stop. O-R-G was always intended as a meta-project on the organization of a design practice, carefully staged and self-consciously produced. It was incorporated on the first business day of the year 2000, the studio was decorated to camouflage itself to its midtown location, the telephone number is professional (212 563 5900) while the voice mail message is not. It was never meant to last, only to review the existing tools, provide access, bring some people together, then disappear. (Thank you to everyone who has participated so far and to all who may be drafted into future affiliation!) Ideas we've had and evaluations we've made are free for recycling.

But, now it is time to re-organize. O-R-G will close the studio and

David Reinfurt
RESPONSE

reform as an ever-looser, always-expanding network of individuals connected through a common website and a distributed email list.

People came around that night, and people left with books, booze, computers and so on. By the end of the evening, everything was gone from that room. Now, I have to stop this backwards story and return to a moment right *before* any of this I've just described -- just before AFTER THE DEMISE PARTY.

//

O.K. The party was on April 27 and now I want to go back 6 weeks before that to March 13. And, given the way that TIME works, I can't know anything yet about what happens next although I've already just told you some of it. Anyway, on March 13, 2006, my daughter Eden was born. Almost none of my friends had children, and there were no other young children in either my or my wife's extended families. (I have to make a note here for whatever it's worth (the world to me) that I met my wife, Sarah Gephart, while getting my MFA in New Haven and we were married five years later.)

I had been running O-R-G as a small, quasi-design practice since 1999. By this point, I was getting the work that I wanted to be doing and being invited into projects I hadn't even considered possible. It was all very gratifying and the future seemed to suggest better things yet. O-R-G had started as an almost-joke -- I had more or less talked and play-acted it into existence and it was now surprisingly successful. Still, there was something telling me to stop, to reorganize, and to move on to . . . well the point is, I had no idea what I was moving on to.

My wife thought shutting down my practice and giving away everything was principally a bad idea. I had a new baby, a new apartment, a very underpaid one-day-a-week teaching gig, and a minimum of paying graphic design commissions. Now I would be changing the last part.

But I wanted a studio close to my new apartment on the lower east side of Manhattan and to my new family. I'd been working loosely with graphic designer and editor Stuart Bailey over the last year in the O-R-G studio, and so we decided to find a space together. We signed a five-year lease on a basement at 38 Ludlow Street. The space was last used for storing food, had 6 1/2-foot ceilings and was fronted by a black steel door with creepy speak-easy sliding panel at eye-level. Anyway, it was cheap.

Meanwhile, Stuart (Bailey -- sorry there are two Ste(w)(u)arts here in my talk) and I had already been working over the previous year on an ambitious project for the Manifesta 6 Biennial in Nicosia, Cyprus. We'd proposed to establish what we called a Just-in-Time printing workshop in a storefront in the old city of Nicosia to cover the graphic design needs of this

six-month project. The storefront printshop was to be called Dexter Sinister.

But it never was. Sometime after signing the lease on the new space on March 1 (2006), the birth of my daughter on March 13, and before AFTER THE DEMISE PARTY on April 27, the entire Manifesta project had spectacularly collapsed.

At that point, an idea appeared -- to take the workshop that we had been developing for Nicosia and transpose it to this basement space on the lower east side. So, on June 26, 2006 we had yet another party, this time simply called The Opening Party, for Dexter Sinister Just-in-Time Workshop and Occasional Bookstore. A friend, Alex Waterman played bluegrass on his cello in our tiny, boiling hot space. We served watermelon and Heineken as I recall.

From there, Dexter Sinister, both the space and also the name that Stuart Bailey and I share for our work together, has bent and reformed to practical considerations. Pretty quickly we didn't do any printing in the space (too small, and financial-logistically impractical.) But we did, however, keep shop every Saturday from 12 to 6pm, running the space as a bookstore. Soon, to our delight and udder befuddlement, we began paying the rent by selling books one day a week. Simply by CALLING it a bookstore (3 small shelves open 6 hours a week in a basement), it BECAME a bookstore.

Well . . . All this does sound SO neat and tidy in the retelling. I'm certain it also sounds rather self-congratulatory. It's also relatively old news. So then, I'll return *now* to the almost-present.

//

A week ago Thursday, I finally met Stewart Brand. I was *so* excited to do so. I basically ambushed him when he was coming to meet a friend of mine at the Museum of Modern Art and to see a show that this friend had organized around The Whole Earth Catalog. Anyway, I stumblingly introduced myself to him, gave him a piece of writing I had made in the form of one very long run-on sentence, and offered some poorly-formed compliment. At the least, I was able to communicate how much his ideas had meant to me in the last 14 years since discovering his book HOW BUILDINGS LEARN in my first year core studio class taught by Sheila de Bretteville in the graphic design program here. HOW BUILDINGS LEARN is a book essentially about TIME.

David Reinfurt
RESPONSE

When I returned to graduate school in 1997, I told myself (and wrote on my application) that the reason to return to school was for TIME. I'd been working professionally as a graphic designer a few years but I knew I needed, or wanted anyway, the TIME to do my own projects, the TIME to develop what I thought about design, the TIME to read, think, and so on. On arriving, it was absolutely nothing like I expected. My time in New Haven

was alternately frustrating, confusing, exhausting and complicated. I was lucky enough to arrive in New Haven the same year as Paul Elliman and the crucible of faculty plus the other students fused some latent ideas I perhaps had brought with me, but which really only appeared years after leaving Yale. And so I returned for TIME, but didn't realize that TIME would also be my dividend.

This is the problem as I see it for you all now: simply, how to make this time, the last two or three years you've spent in New Haven, last at least as long as the payments on your student loans. For me, the time at Yale still feeds my practice almost daily. It helps me remember that always keeping moving is as important, likely more, than figuring out exactly what you are doing at any one particular moment. The present, anyway, is only produced posthumously by how we choose to talk about it.

So then, meeting Stewart Brand a week ago now, comes for me at what I think is called an *auspicious moment*. You are also all sitting in the expansive 7-second present of an auspicious moment yourselves. Soon enough, you'll all be doing something else.

Next week, we are closing down Dexter Sinister (kind of) and launching a new project. I can't speak very convincingly about the new project at this point, because I really feel like it hasn't yet arrived. Still, I have been thinking a little bit about what to do to mark the occasion. Right now, the best I can think of is to reuse the same recycled DEMISE PARTY text that I originally borrowed from Mr. Brand and repurposed 6 years ago. I'd like to read the final paragraph of that text now, which first appeared at the back of THE LAST ^ UPDATED WHOLE EARTH CATALOG in 1974 and subsequently reappeared as a mass email in 2006, remains actively floating in and around the internet, and lodged somewhere in the crevices of my brain (*this is then me (now) quoting my 2006 self quoting Stewart Brand from 1974*):

"We get asked a lot, 'What's in the future for you folks,' as if we knew. Well, let's see. We'll clean up the garage and sell the production equipment, maybe to Kesey who wants to start a traveling magazine called Spit in the Ocean. Us out-of-work production people will draw our two-weeks severance pay. We'll keep the Truck Store going in Menlo Park, and maybe try some new things with it in relation to Portrola Institute. We'll have our DEMISE party that Scott Beach has set up at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. We'll do some traveling. We'll take a ride on Patchen's coda:

Pause.
And begin again."

Thank you very much.

David Reinfurt
RESPONSE

Grace Robinson-Leo

Graphic design is knowing that everything around you is fair game. You can re-imagine it—what it does, what it looks like, how it's used. I look at types of communication that are being underutilized, and experiment with ways they can be used to either communicate the same content in a more effective way through a different formalization, or shift the intention of the medium to communicate a different type of content entirely. Both of these methods are dependent on trying to communicate real content and ideas through the work, so I can try to measure if my experiments have any effect.

A mode of communication is anything that attempts to impart a message to a user. This may seem broad, but I think it's important to pay attention to how people actually receive messaging today, and then explore those formats. For example, I've tried to use the format of Instagram to communicate other types of information than personal documentation; questioned what types of graphic design can be inserted into HTML emails and whether that format can be used differently; and reworked a type of public messaging that was alienating its intended audience. The work is a success if users can both access what I'm trying to communicate, and be more engaged with the content than they were before my intervention.

Grace Robinson-Leo
STATEMENT

When I explore the underutilized aspects of various platforms, it is with an eye towards being more positive and generous with the platforms, rather than cynical of the way they are used. Instead of being only critical of what exists, can design suggest an alternative? If there's a better way to do it, can my work demonstrate that? The difference between being critical of something and taking the step to imagine and explore a different way of doing it is in giving myself the agency to intervene, and the freedom to imagine alternatives.

→

Looking at the real ways that people receive messaging today is about empathizing. In every project, I try to think about what users really want to see and interact with, and how to work within those tendencies to then convince them of something new. There's a fine line between something new and alien and something new

but somehow familiar, and I try to fall on the familiar side of that line so that the user has some intuitive idea of how to interact with the communication. Empathy with the user is what guides my design to that side of the line. Can the audience understand it? Is it confusing? Can it be more direct? Is there a payoff for the user to spend time with the design and interact with it?

Although, like every designer, I'm interested in making formally beautiful work, I've learned that different aesthetics are appropriate for different situations. Part of empathizing with the audience is respecting their opinion and creating design that communicates to them clearly what I intend it to. Not every piece of work I make is aesthetically linked, but every piece of work takes visual cues from its intended audience, the content it's communicating, and the uniqueness of its platform.

A lot of my work deals with how to reach, and then persuade, an audience. I focus on the interaction point: where and when the design will interact with the viewer. This fulcrum of communication, in any medium, is where I like to experiment. I have tried to make work that communicates real messaging that I believe in, and works with real platforms that have a wide reach. Just because it's real doesn't mean it can't be an experiment.

Splash pages are traditionally image-heavy webpages that the user must click through to access the main content of the site. They set the tone for the website, and usually create a sort of mood or idea that reinforces the brand.

Instead of reinforcing the content you're about to encounter, what if a splash page inoculated you against it? What if the splash page made you critical of the content of the site? To demonstrate this idea, I made two splash pages that do this in different ways.

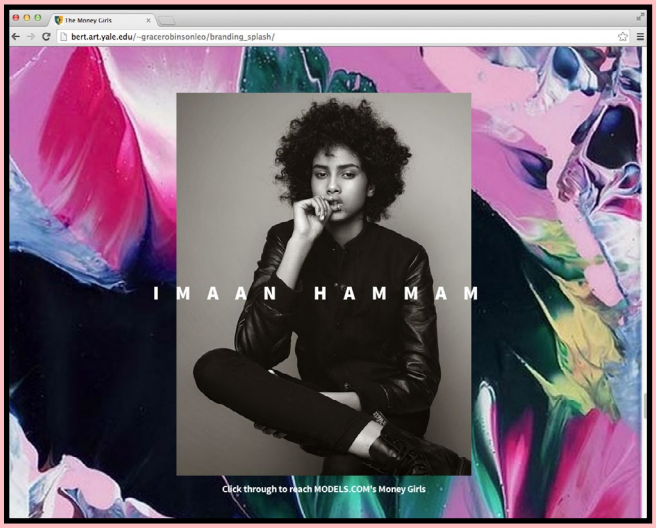
The lack of diversity in the fashion industry is a long-standing issue. There are plenty of models of color, but especially among the prized lucrative contracts, the models used are almost exclusively white. This is such a ubiquitous problem that it's almost invisible; we see the models as brands, and it's easy to forget there are no women of color. I made a splash page of prominent black models the user must click through before they get to Model.com's list of Money Girls (the highest earners). The Money Girls are almost entirely white, a fact the user realizes after seeing black models first.

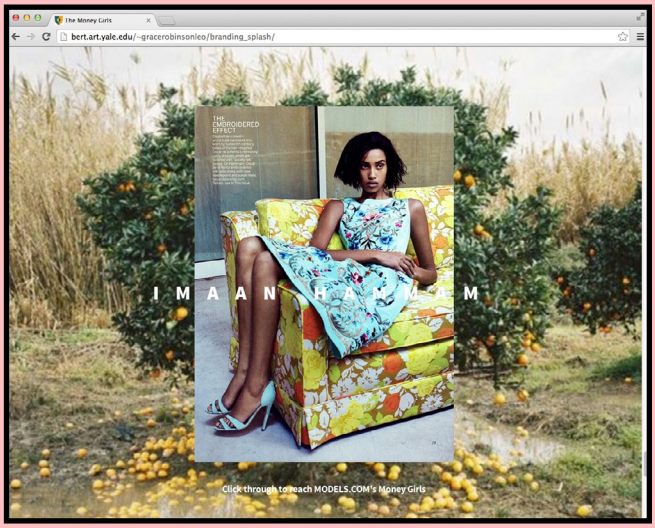
Dr. Marten's has a line of shoes called "Made in England," which they sell for substantially more money than the other lines of their shoes. However, "Made in England" shoes aren't actually different than the other styles in terms of production or quality; therefore, the price jump is purely because the user identifies "Made in England" with craftsmanship and tradition. "Made in England" is a brand, not a guarantee of any material qualities.

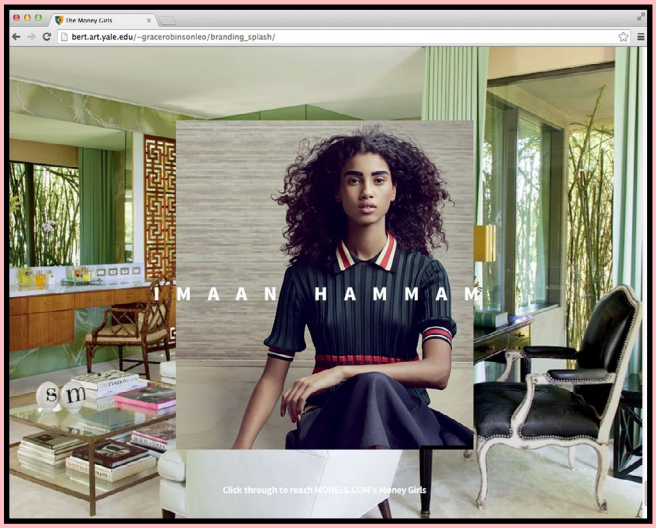
The splash page highlights Dr. Marten's own press release noting this, and asks users to be critical of their own brand associations.

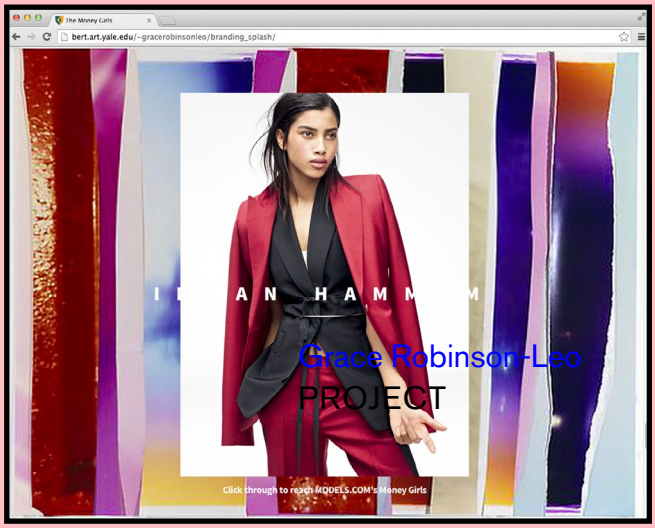
Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

→



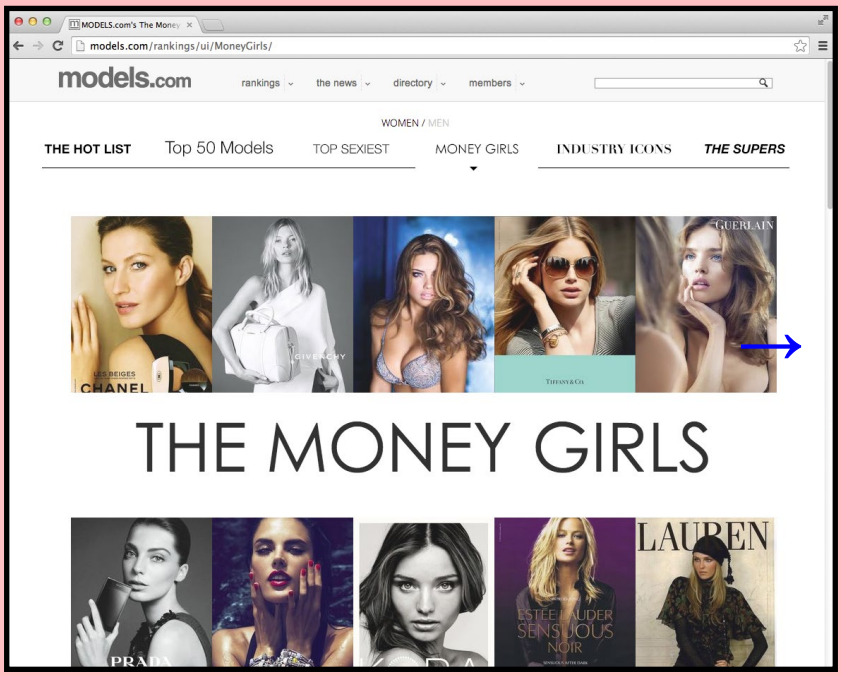


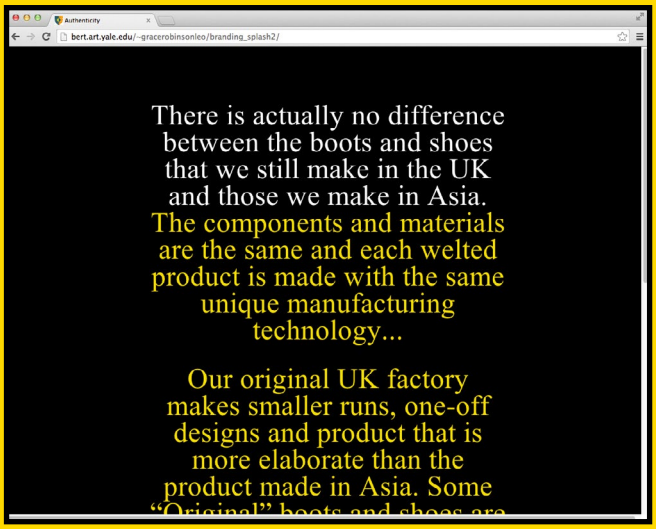




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PROJECT

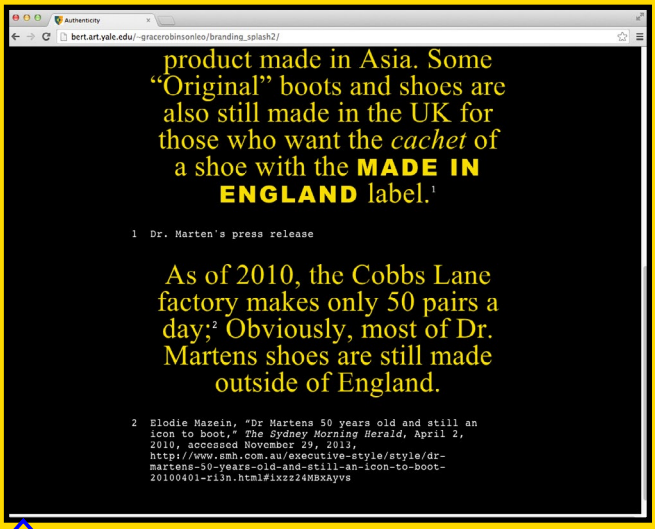


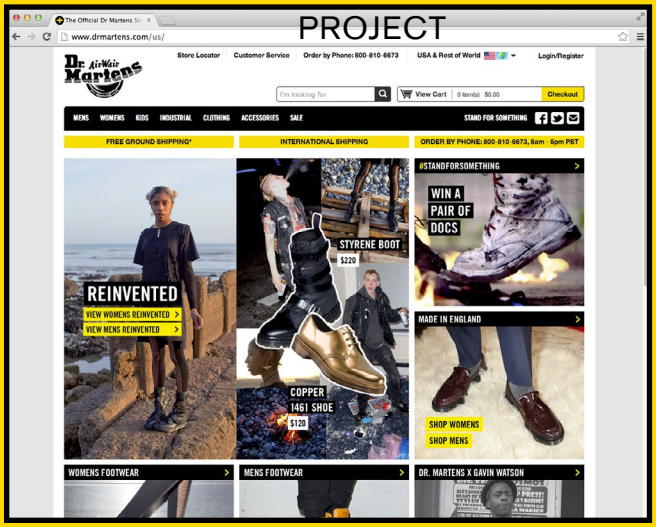




Grace Robinson-Leo

PROJECT





I saw a series of public service announcements in New York's subway system, funded by the city. These posters used stock photography of babies crying and a childlike handwriting typeface to speak about teen pregnancy. The copy is written as if from the child's perspective, telling teen moms things like, "I'm twice as likely not to graduate highschool because you had me as a teen."

This ad campaign cost the city over $400,000 and was widely viewed as unsuccessful. I read online comments specifically from blogs by and for teen moms to try and understand why the ads weren't working. First, many teen moms wanted to have a child young, or are happy they did, and these ads shame them. Second, the stock photography was too specific: it alienates anyone outside of its specific racial and economic-class references and there is no emotional draw as the images become almost comical. And, as one commenter noted, the messaging was ineffective: "Everyone thinks they won't get pregnant. If someone would just make an ad saying that it can happen to you, that would be better than these."

The posters I produced try and use abstract forms so as to not alienate any member of the audience, as well as to convey more emotion than the stock photography. They run in a series—with the information only on the final "pregnant" poster—so that they are less aggressive, and empathetic instead of judgmental. They also work with flat color and graphic shapes to visually differentiate themselves from the world of stock photography usually on subway posters.

As the series technique seemed to work well for visualizing risk, I used this method on a poster series about the need for healthcare and the cost of a simple sprained ankle if you're uninsured. In both cases, the language is as clear and direct as possible, neither patronizing nor preaching to the audience.

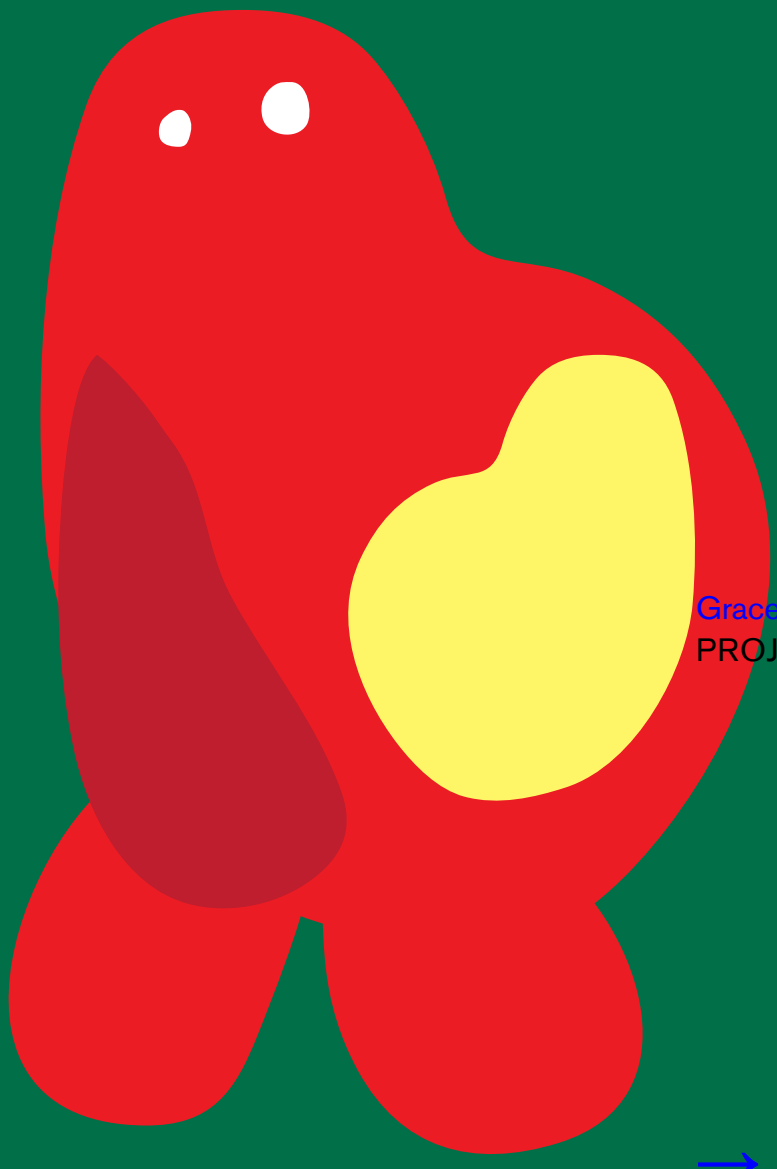
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PROJECT





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PROJECT

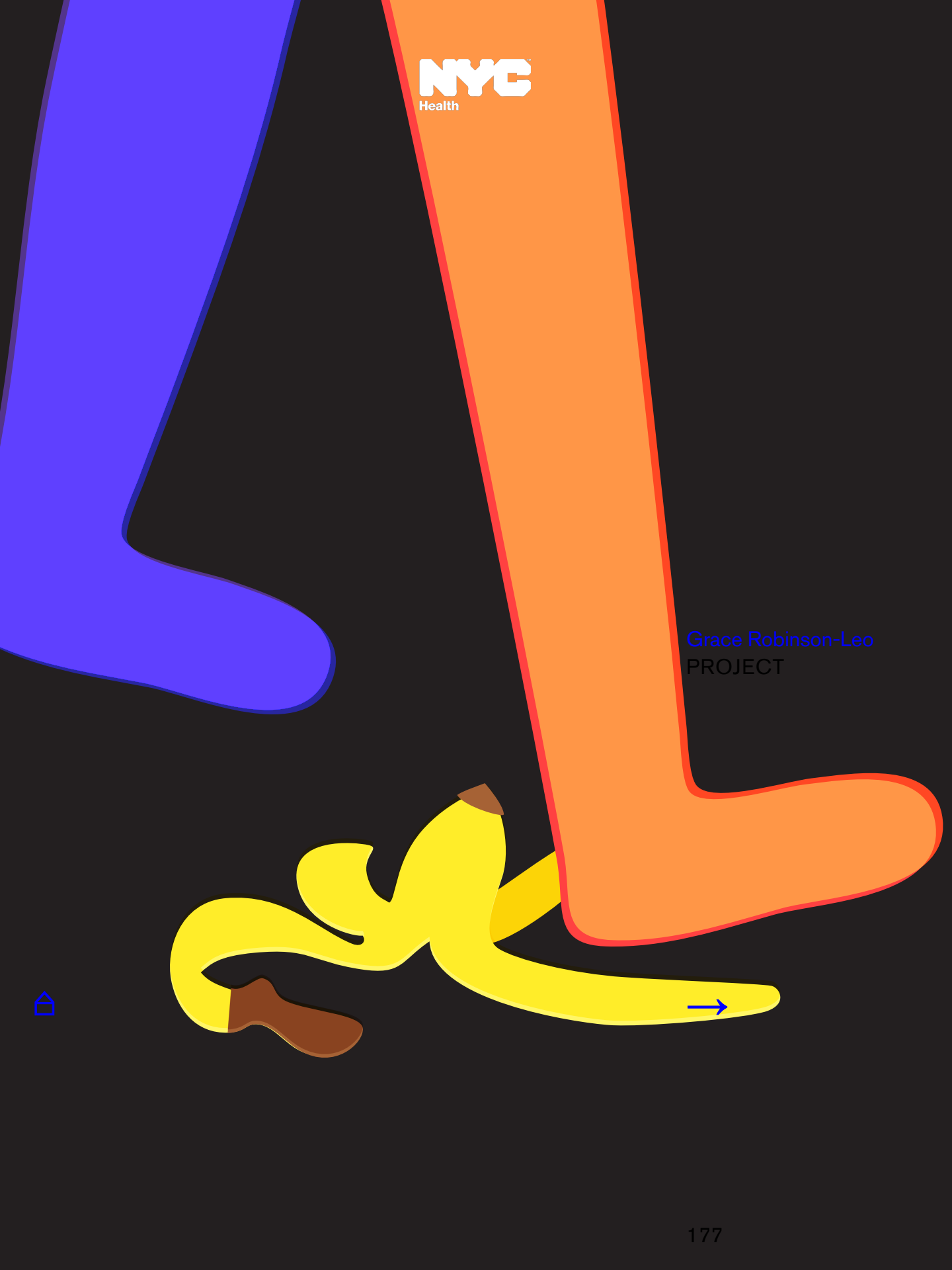
Everyone thinks it won't happen to them.
If you have unprotected sex, you can get pregnant.



Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

NYC Health

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT


NYC
Health
Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

NYC Health

IF YOU DON'T HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE, A TRIP TO THE E.R. FOR A SPRAINED ANKLE CAN COST $1,498.

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT



From a 2013 study, funded by the National Institute of Health, of over 8,000 emergency room visits.


NYC
IF YOU DON'T HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE, A TRIP TO THE E.R. FOR A SPRAINED ANKLE CAN COST $1,498.
Grace Robinson-Leo

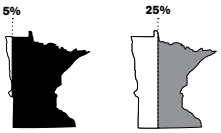
Graphic design is sometimes talked about as “value added.” In this way, design gets relegated to luxury products, branding, cultural clients—“Everything necessary already exists,” the argument goes, “so design is what separates brands of goods that do exactly the same thing.” While I believe this, I also believe there are still people that need information communicated to them—a core purpose of design, before any level of value adding.

I worked with a liberal political group in Minnesota—TakeAction—to design pamphlets that explained several political issues. Our partnership started with a pamphlet on the health care exchanges, and I continued working with them to make a pamphlet on voter disenfranchisement in the African-American community.

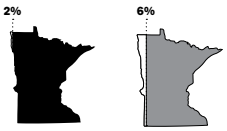
I believe in these issues, and believe that if people understood them, things would change. The flyers were designed to print on TakeAction’s 11x17 black and white laser printer, and thousands of copies were distributed throughout Minnesota.

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

But it doesn't affect us all equally.



African-Americans make up roughly 5% of the Minnesota population, but represent over a quarter of the total number of those disenfranchised.



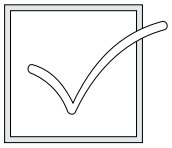
American Indians make up less than 2% of the population, but, in 2011, they made up more than 6% of those disenfranchised.



African American Minnesotans are 10 times more likely to be pulled into the criminal justice system than European American Minnesotans, even though both groups commit crimes at the same rate.

Felony disenfranchisement prevents Minnesotans with criminal convictions from having a stake in their communities, and a voice in decisions that affect all aspects of their lives. Although felony disenfranchisement impacts all Minnesotans, as a result of disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system, African Americans and American Indians are disproportionately affected.

Minnesotans convicted of a felony lose their right to vote until they have completed their entire sentence, including parole and probation.



Disenfranchisement is when members of our community can't vote because they were convicted of a crime.



Even though European American Minnesotans and African American Minnesotans commit crimes at the same rate...



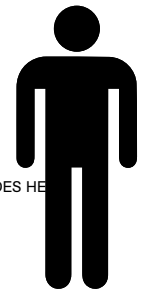
Disenfranchisement disproportionately affects Minnesotans of color.

Our state has a problem.

Minnesotans lose the right to vote until they have completed their entire sentence after being convicted of a felony, including any term of community supervision, even if they never spent any time in prison or only served a short jail sentence. In 2012, more than 63,000 Minnesotans couldn't vote due to a felony conviction. 73% of those disenfranchised Minnesotans aren't behind bars—they're working, paying taxes, and are members of our communities.

This has long-lasting repercussions for the community: research has shown that children are more likely to vote as adults if they are raised by parents who engage in the voting process. Minnesota has the worst racial voting gap in the country. According to Census data from 2013, we have the worst African American disparity. By disenfranchising people who are not behind bars, we lose not only the voice of those directly impacted by felon disenfranchisement; we also discourage participation by future generations.

Approximately ⅓ of the young black men in the US are currently in prison, or on parole, or probation.



TAKE ACTION MN

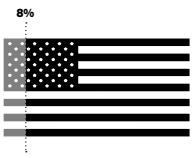
Come help out!
NEXT EVENT GOES HE

Disenfranchisement hurts our communities.

Let's do something about disenfranchisement.

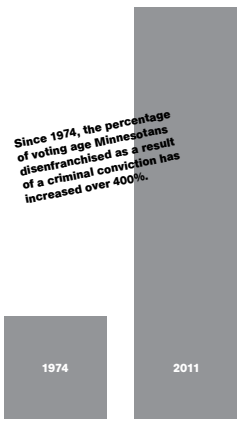
Disenfranchisement affects us all...

In 2011, roughly 8% of African Americans who were old enough to vote were disenfranchised.



The number of people disenfranchised has greatly increased in recent years because felony convictions and sentence lengths, especially for drug offenses, have exploded.

Since 1974, the percentage of voting age Minnesotans disenfranchised as a result of a criminal conviction has increased over 400%.



Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

Restore the right to vote.

TAKE ACTION MN

Restoring the right to vote for those living in the community will positively engage more people in the democratic process, make all Minnesota communities stronger, make the law more clear and equitable, and ultimately make our communities safer and more just.

Research has shown that persons with criminal convictions in their past are less likely to be arrested again in states that restore voting rights after release from incarceration than in states where they face permanent disenfranchisement. Law enforcement and corrections professionals agree that encouraging individuals to take on this important responsibility makes sense. Additionally, a policy that permits all individuals who have served their time in jail or prison to vote reduces confusion among voters and election officials about who can vote, thereby easing election administration and reducing government costs.

Minnesota should pass legislation to allow people who have served their time and are living in their community to vote. By moving to this model, Minnesota will join thirteen states that disenfranchise only those persons who are currently incarcerated for a felony conviction. This reform will promote successful reintegration into the community, as voting can be a powerful way to contribute to one's community and to feel invested and empowered to play a positive role.

It will help if you gather a few pieces of information before you log on to **MNsure.org**:

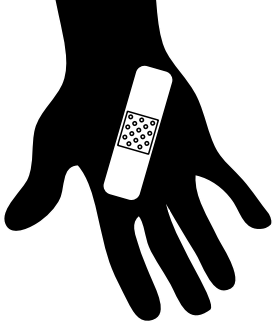
- **Household Income**
  Know your household **income**—your best estimate of your household's 2-week, monthly or annual income. You don't need to bring last year's tax forms, but if you have them, they can be a helpful reference.
- **Social Security Numbers**
  You'll need to enter the **Social Security numbers** of anyone applying for coverage (or **document numbers** for documented immigrants).
- **Employer Coverage Information**
  Know if your employer (or an employer of your spouse) **offers health coverage** for you or your family, and what the premium cost is to you for *individual* coverage, **even if you don't accept it**. You can also ask your employer to fill out the "Employer Coverage Tool" found at healthcare.gov.

QUESTIONS?

MNsure has trained staff to help you! Visit **mnsure.org**, or call **1-855-366-7873**. MNsure can also help you find a "navigator" in your community to help you face to face.

Want to share your experience or help spread the word? Contact **Liz Xiong**, Healthcare Organizer at TakeAction Minnesota by calling **651-379-0754** or emailing **lizx@takeactionminnesota.org**





WHAT IS THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT?

The **Affordable Care Act** was signed into law by President Obama in 2010.

The **Affordable Care Act** (often called "**Obamacare**") does several things. It **stops insurance companies from denying coverage** to people because they are sick or charging people more based on their health history or gender. It requires all Americans to have health insurance, and **it expands programs like Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare**, and offers subsidies to **make coverage more affordable** to people who don't have employer coverage.

New "**Health Insurance Marketplaces**" opening in every state will tell you what plans are available to you. In Minnesota, our new Marketplace is **MNsure**.

MNSURE IS OUR HEALTH INSURANCE MARKETPLACE

MNsure has a website that lets you see the **costs and benefits of different insurance plans**, and shop for one that fits your needs. All of the plans on MNsure.org will cover important benefits like regular check-ups, maternity, and hospital care, and **many people will qualify for low-cost or free plans**.

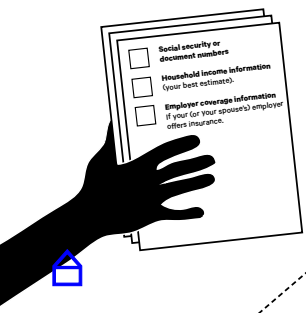
MNsure isn't an insurance company. It's a new, better way to help you find the best plan for your needs.



Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

1 GET READY

Get the information you need ready. Look at the checklist on the back of this flyer!



Hey! What's a **navigator**?

A **navigator** is someone trained and certified by MNsure to help you understand your options and choose your coverage. Navigators work in community organizations around the state. You can find one through the MNsure website or call center.

2 LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS

Call **1-855-366-7873** or contact a navigator near you.



Or visit the healthcare marketplace online:



3 #GETCOVERED

If you **enroll by the 15th of the month**, your coverage can **begin the 1st of the next month.**

Open enrollment for private insurance plans on MNsure closes March 31st, 2014. (You can enroll in Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare year round if you qualify.)

After January 1st, 2014, most people are required to have qualified insurance coverage or may pay a fine of $95 or 1% of your income (whichever is more) per year. Medicare, Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare, most employer-sponsored insurance and all insurance sold through MNsure are all examples of qualified coverage.

QUESTIONS?

MNsure has trained staff to help you! Visit **mnsure.org**, or call **1-855-366-7873**. MNsure can also help you find a **navigator** in your community to help you face to face.

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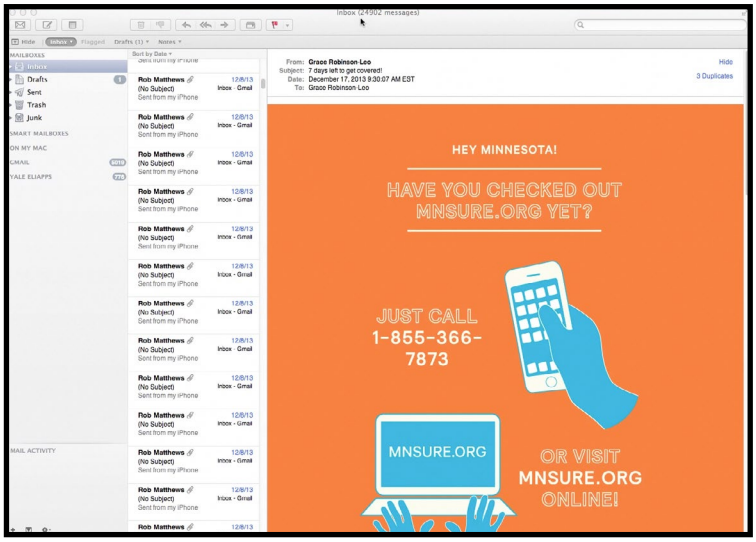
Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

Adding Animation to HTML Emails

Every day I receive junk email newsletters. I open them and delete them. These emails are an incredibly direct form of messaging that we all interact with daily, but it's easy to ignore them. I was curious: what can HTML emails do, and how can they catch people's attention?

I was particularly excited about including animations to make the emails more engaging. I worked with TakeAction to create an animated email version of the healthcare exhange flyer, which I designed with small animations to entice viewers to keep the email open and not immediately delete it.

TakeAction sent the email out to 12,968 people. 18.5% opened, which is average for them. The surprise was in the number of forwards: On average, each person who opened the email forwarded it ten times. Several Minnesota senators and state officials also asked for the email to send to their entire mailing list. This number is significantly higher than any of TakeAction's other email blasts and shows that bringing design and animation to their messaging caused their audience to take notice and engage with the content in a new way.



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PROJECT

HEY MINNESOTA!

HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT MNSURE.ORG YET?

JUST CALL
1-855-366-7873





OR VISIT
MNSURE.ORG
ONLINE!

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

Have questions or need help getting enrolled?
Please contact Liz Xiong, Healthcare Organizer at TakeAction Minnesota.

Click here to email Liz!

Or call her at
651-379-0754

GET READY

It will help if you gather a few pieces

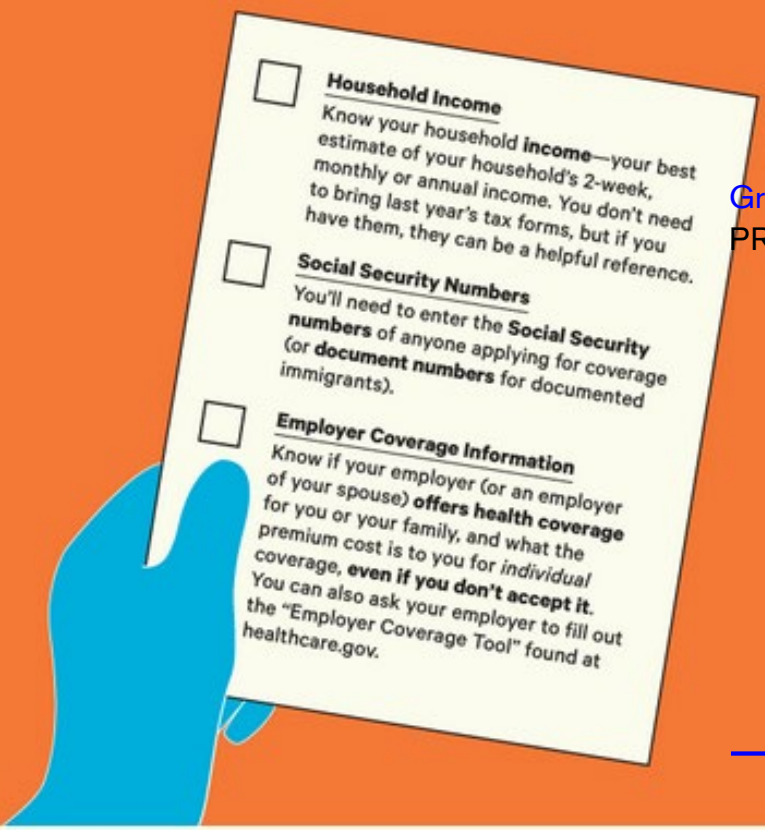
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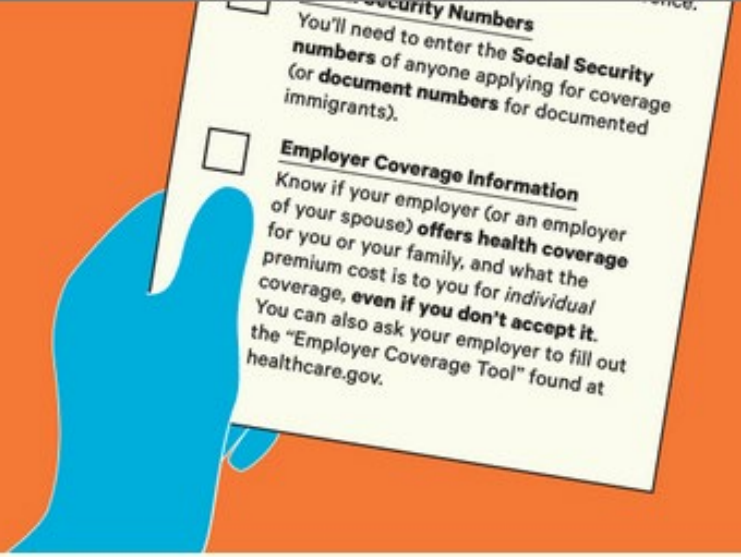


Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

AND GET COVERED!

If you enroll by the 15th of the month, your coverage can begin the 1st of the next month.

Open enrollment for private insurance plans on



AND GET COVERED!

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Have you already checked out MNsure.org?
We want to hear about your experience!

Click here
to tell us how it went!

THANKS FROM TAKE ACTION MN

If you can't see this email, click here:

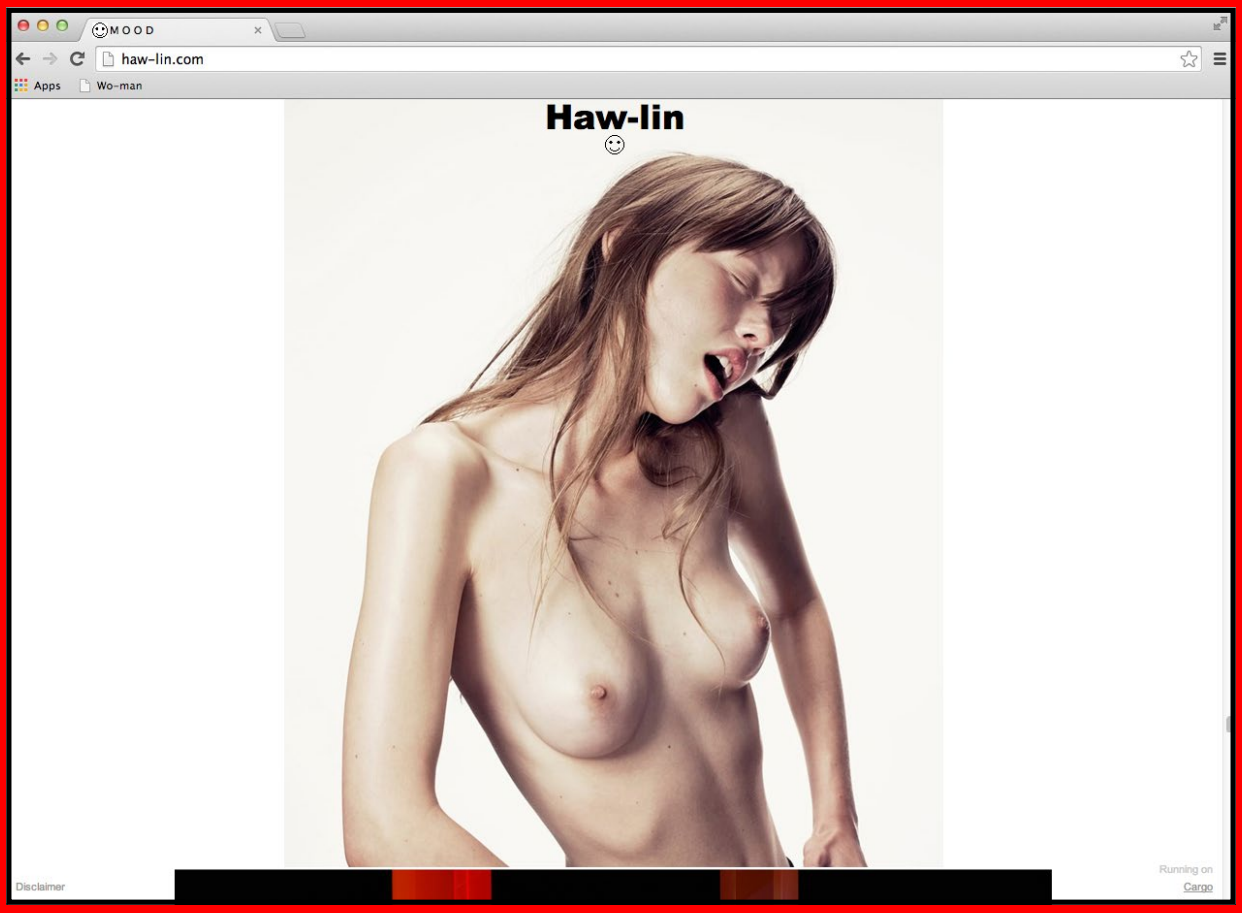
TakeAction Minnesota

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

Haw-lin is an image blog run by two male graphic designers (previously of the studio Hort). It created a specific type of aesthetic as a design and lifestyle blog, one widely referenced in the fashion industry for moodboards and inspiration. The aesthetics of branding and fashion don't originate *from* the product; instead, they're applied *to* the product. Haw-lin might be just a blog, but they coined a style that was quickly commercially appropriated, and thus had a huge influence on visual communication. I looked at Haw-Lin all the time, but I was disturbed at the nude images of women on the blog, interspersed with nice books and living rooms. Because of the structure of a blog, you have to scroll through every image in succession, meaning that viewers are powerless to not view the pornographic images in order to see the others.

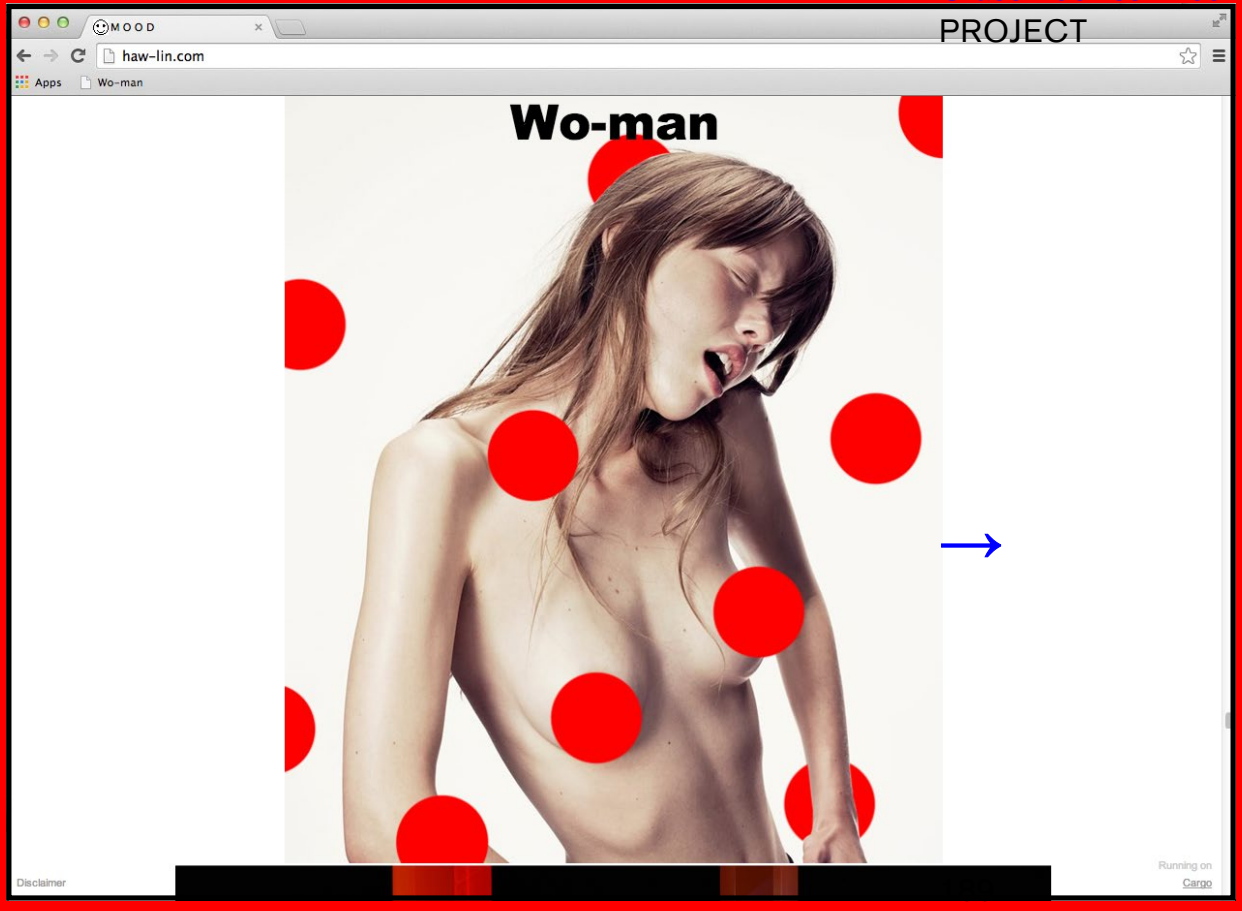
I wanted to find a way to keep Haw-lin's aesthetic intact while encouraging viewers to question being force-fed pornography (always of women) in the context of a design blog. I created a bookmarklet that users can activate on Haw-lin's site. As they move through the blog and see pornographic images, they can click on them to replace the image with collages that I created. Each collage is based off the original image with visual effects as well as an actual design object inserted. This intervention preserves the aesthetic of Haw-lin while making the blog more about design objects, and intervenes in the medium of the blog in an unexpected way.

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PROJECT



Grace Robinson-Leo

PROJECT



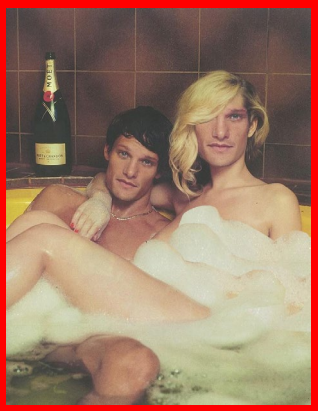
















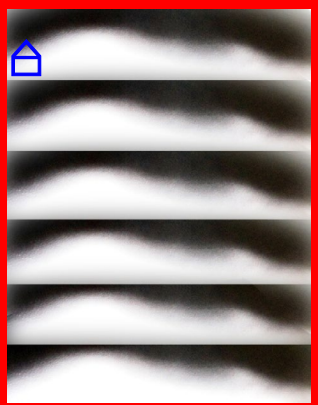
Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

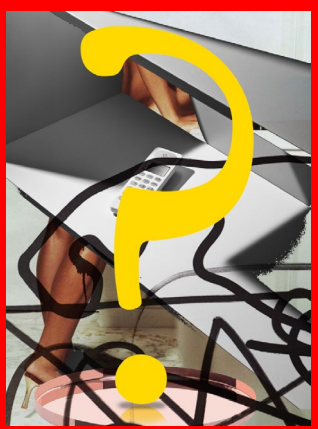






























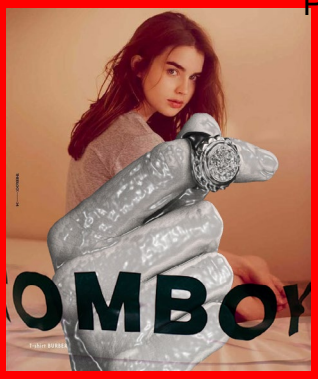


Grace Robinson-Leo

PROJECT

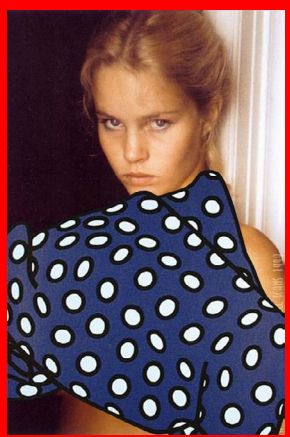


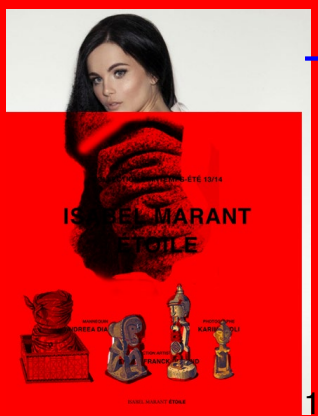






























Grace Robinson-Leo

PROJECT

















This iPhone app looks at how to translate the dynamic aspects of a debate or argument between two people into the format of an e-reader, taking advantage of the native actions of the iPhone. It also tries to tackle how an interactive element can keep political campaign promises relevant, even after they've left the 24-hour news cycle.

The app is a reader for the presidential debates. The candidates' remarks are split into two columns, each larger than half the screen width, so that when you view one candidate, the other candidate's remarks are always "peaking in" on the side. The user swipes left to right and right to left, physically mimicking the back and forth of a debate, to follow the conversation. Users can also chose to read only the remarks from the candidate they are interested in by swiping up and down. Campaign promises are linked to Google searches so that users can evaluate the current state of the issue whenever they interact with the app, months or even years after the debate has faded from the public eye.



Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

I thought about the role of the volunteer escort at an abortion clinic: someone who walks with women from their cars to the clinic to empathize with them and shield them from aggressive pro-life protesters. I put myself in the shoes of a woman who needs an abortion, and thought about the actual steps one might take before getting to the clinic. Thinking about the situation from the users' perspective led me to a simple insight: for most people, an online search is the easiest and most confidential way to find out about medical options. However, a search for "how to get an abortion" is full of false propaganda in the form of ads (paid for by extreme pro-life groups) that use the same language as legitimate abortion clinics, but then give false facts to scare women from abortions (lies like "You'll never be able to get pregnant again," etc.). How could design act like the abortion clinic escort, shielding and empathizing with women?

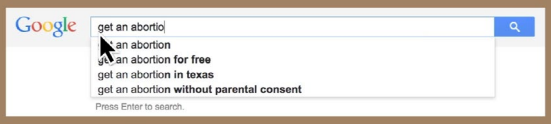
Although I understand the point of view of pro-life groups, I don't think women who are looking for medical information should be purposefully deceived. By researching these ads, I discovered that they stop showing up in searches after they have been clicked on enough times (maxing out their advertising budget). I produced a video campaign asking people to purposefully click on the ads that they knew were deceitful to max out their clicks, so that when women performed the searches looking for legitimate information, the ads would no longer appear. In this way, instead of ignoring the ads (a form of passively condoning them) the user can actively protest through clicking.

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT





If you're pregnant and you don't want to be, you need support and access to the facts.



Searching online is the easiest and most private way you can learn about your options.

When you search for facts about getting a legal abortion, pro-life groups sneak in judgmental and false information through advertisements.

These ads try to trick women who are looking for information about abortion into visiting their websites.

Grace Robinson-Leo PROJECT

These ads are designed to be dishonest.

Free **Abortion** Information
www.free**abortion**help.com/
1 (877) 903 4078
Get the Facts, Know Your Options.
100% Free & Confidential Services.

We can stop them.

If we click on these ads enough times, they'll disappear.

If we click on these ads enough times *every day*, we can stop them from showing up for women who are searching for real information about their options.

Instagram Videos for Kids

How do kids receive information? Animation is effective and engaging, but how do kids get to the videos? Younger kids can't read enough to navigate to a video hosting site like YouTube or Vimeo, and DVDs are only appropriate for longer movies and, as physical objects, have their own distribution system concerns. Instagram is the most direct way to see video today, and even young children have an intuitive understanding of how to interact with iPhones. Creating an Instagram account for the animations allows two ways for kids to see them: viewing the account, the child can see all animations in a series, or, the parent can "follow" and the videos will show up in the their Instagram feed so that kids can see them when they're posted.

The animations work with simple letterforms acting out various words, and are both simple and humorous. Like the pregnancy posters, the abstract characters express emotion.

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT





Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

I approached my thesis book as another platform that could be more generous and positive, both in its object qualities as well as in its content. Thesis books are traditionally about your work while at Yale, and only 3 copies exist. Future students use them as reference when they begin their own thesis process and begin to wonder what their own thesis should be.

When I was beginning my thesis process, several questions I thought about over and over were: why am I being asked to do this? Is making a thesis really more helpful than just creating more work? Does a thesis really do anything for me in my life after school? This is the type question I wanted answered when I was looking at former student's books, and what I think future students will be thinking about when they look at mine.

To this end, I contacted former students with copies of their theses. I asked them to tell me if their thesis was still relevant, and how so. How did the work they do here help them in their post-graduate life? Their responses, and their original thesis statements, make up the bulk of my book. These responses, along with my own thesis, suggest a way a thesis book could more directly address its future audience and communicate more generously with them, as well.

I want my book to be as easily accessible as possible, and that end, there should be endless copies. A PDF is then the best choice. But the PDF is a platform as well: once settling on this form, I began to explore how the PDF could function differently and be more engaging. Creating internal links allows for a navigation system and basic animation, and the PDF is designed to be both a print-out as well as an interactive publication viewed on the iPad. The PDF is available online for free, hosted permanently through the Internet Archive. My thesis book is an interactive resource for future students.

Grace Robinson-Leo
PROJECT

Ryan Waller

170 Pop, Gavin Turk 2003
171 Calvin Klein Jeans, photograph by Steven Meisel, 1995
172 Air Mobile, James Goggin, 2004
173-4 La Chinoise, Jean-Luc Godard, 1967

The Hippies are Back &

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT



170



171

They're Punks

Originally presented to the Yale community on September 16 2008 with the help of Paul Elliman. This layout of text & images is a modified version of the 16x16 project (cf. pg. 125) made with the help of Linda Van Deurson over the remainder of September.

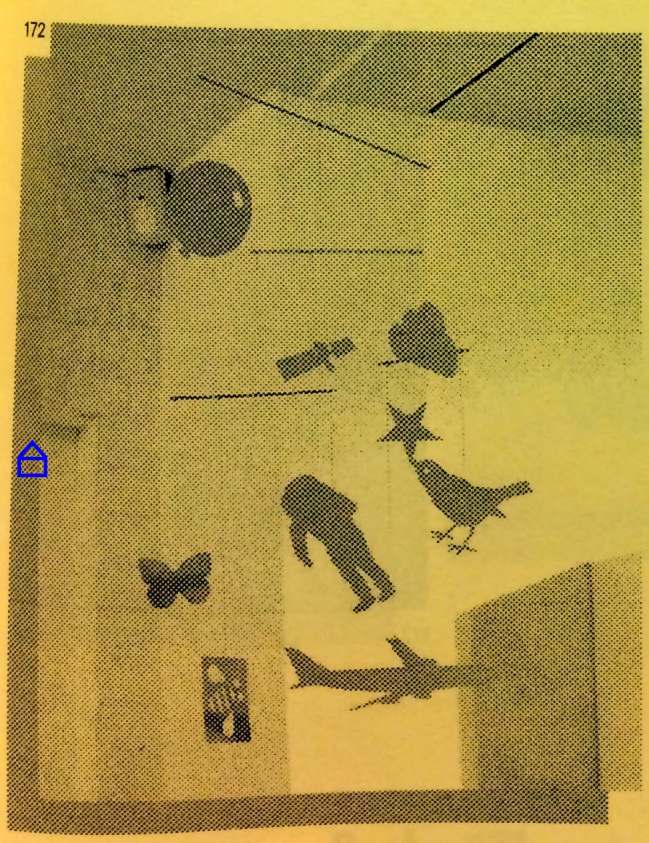
The work that interests me blurs the distinction between high and low, art and non-art, and past and present. The work that I make is an attempt to question those Modernist utopian ideals that characterize the fundamental principles of design, a tradition born out of Pop art's subversion of the mass culture.

In particular, I'm interested in the use of phrases and images that develop underground and are adopted by the mainstream. I believe that the overlapping of signs as a result of popular cultures willing absorption of the counterculture strengthens a shared visual language. A designer's role is to create meaning out of this ambiguity. Pop art resulted from the realization that all modes of representation were ideological constructs.

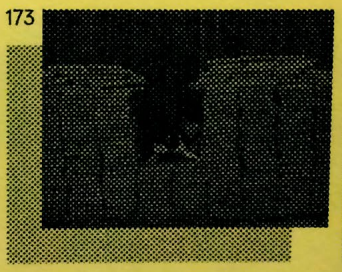
Jean-Luc Godard used "clear images" with "vague ideas" to offer alternating, ironic modes of representing the counterculture. Godard's contradictory impulses are representative of a postmodern critique of the authoritative voice. His 'clear' versus 'vague' approach attempts to open up interpretation while his relationship to appropriated image and language is central in his attempt to develop new modes of representation.

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT

172



173



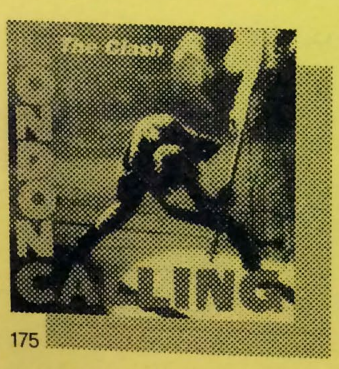
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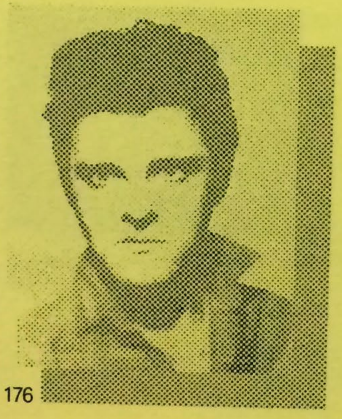
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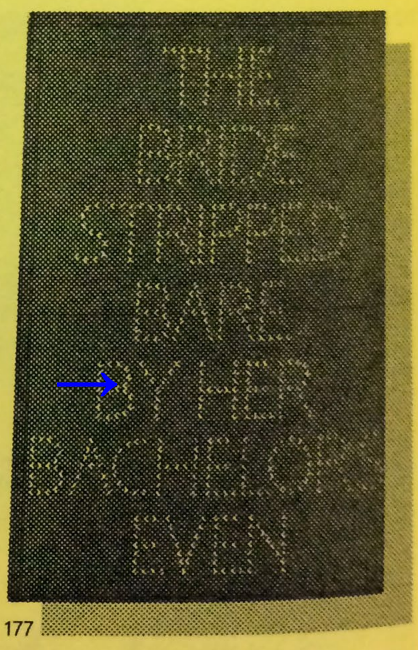
175 London Calling, The Clash, 1979
176 White Silver Diamond Elvis, Gavin Turk, 2007
177 The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bacherlors, Even, Richard Hamilton, 1976
178 Zang Tumb Tumb, F.T. Marinetti, 1912
179 War Is Over, Yoko Ono, 1969
180 Zang! Tumb Tumb, Experimental Jetset, 2003

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT



175


176


177

Design's intuitive relationship with history has now gone beyond the so-called "art of appropriation", which naturally implies an ideology of ownership, and has moved towards a visual culture of the intertextuality of combined forms, a culture of constant activity of signs based on an intensely collective ideal of sharing.

Fundamentally opposed to the banalities of ordinary life and massification, the avant-garde sought to define itself through their opposition to the mainstream. The countercultures of the Beatniks, the hippies, and the punks visualized their rejection through reinterpretations of the existing visual culture.

Lennon and Ono's 1969 War Is Over campaign represents a conflation of avant-garde artistic practice with advertising, the ultimate in pop culture. The billboards and posters, part of Lennon and Ono's conceptual work during this period, represent an unprecedented cross-pollination between the world of pop culture and high culture — and between the worlds of entertainment and counterculture.

Experimental Jetset's 2003 design used the visual language of Ono with the written language of Marinetti, whose poem visualized sound through typography. The original language intended to glorify war with the impressions of battle, while Jetset's interpretation combines two countercultural reactions to create a humorous ambivalence.

A characteristic of the post-pop age, ambivalence is uncertainty; the role of which is to reveal the contradiction of the inconsistent. Designs power is in its ability to create these multiple interpretations.

Sixty years removed from Duchamp's nomination of ordinary objects to high art status, punks styled their fashions with common household items. Chain stores followed by using the graphic symbolism for a mall-rat aesthetic while high-end magazines reinterpreted the look for an even further removed audience. Across this trajectory exists an awareness of the coded construction of popular culture — whether through the eyes of the subcultural artist, the countercultural punk, the low-culture caterers or the high-culture stylemakers.

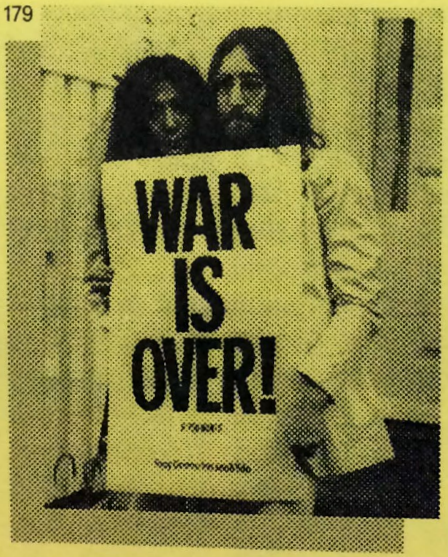
Zang Tumb Tumb had previously been appropriated in the eighties for the initials of British record company ZTT, whose group "Frankie Goes to Hollywood" was marketed

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT

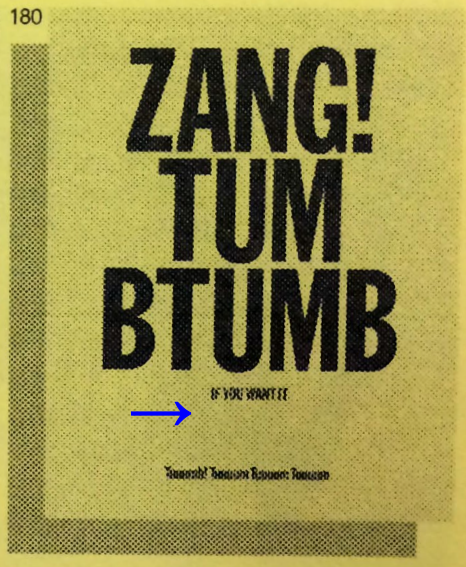
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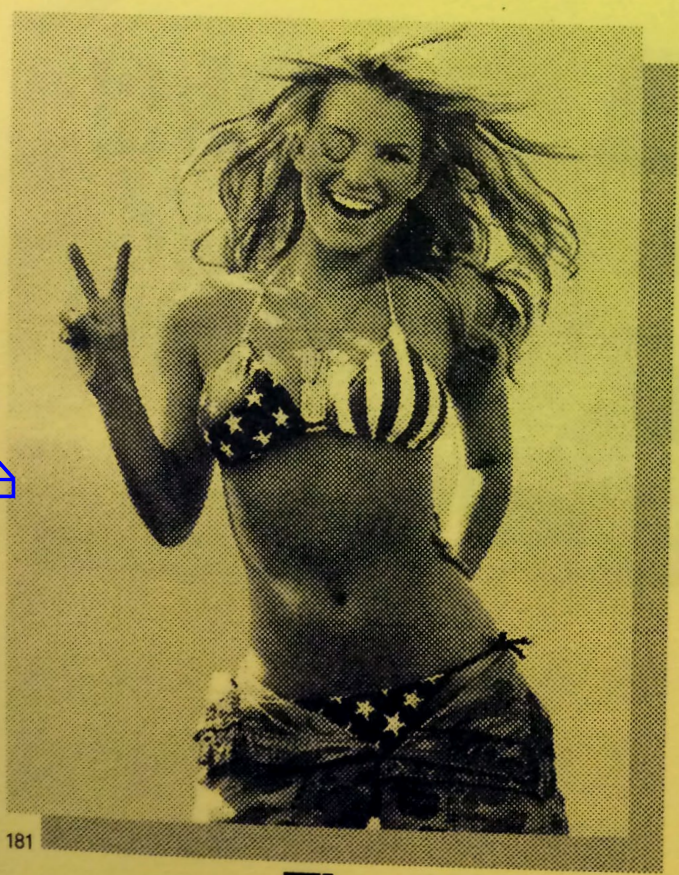


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181 Political Song for Jessica Simpson to Sing, Ida Ekblad, 2006
182 Frankie Goes To Hollywood, 1993
183 ZTT Records logo, 1983
184 Donna Magazine, Katherine Hamnett, 1993
185 House of Holland, date unknown
186 Untitled (Girlfriend), Richard Prince, 1993
187 Interview magazine, Richard Prince, 2008
188 French Playboy, March 2008



181



182



183

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT

as a "strategic assault on pop." ZTT co-founder Paul Morley authored the provocative slogans for the band's t-shirts as part of this campaign, whose bold black on white type treatments by designer Katharine Hamnett became an iconic style in 1984. Hamnett's designs themselves borrowed the language style of sixties protest signage, and in turn inspired an updated ambiguity.

Through the blurring of pop culture's boundaries, the dissolved counterculture has developed into a sign system to use in its place.

Richard Prince's appropriated photographs of biker magazine girls in the early nineties developed into a self-referential opportunity to photograph the women of Battlestar Gallactica 15 years later.

Referencing the glamour and seductiveness of the seventies, French Playboy recently transformed the previously raunchy publication into a more expensive and fashionably arresting work. Similar to the work of Prince, Playboy's role in defining a fashionable sense of irony is self-referential. The use of sexuality as a provocative device is less confrontational today, but by referencing the past, such as the hyperrealist paintings by John Kacere, history is used to signify an associative reaction. What begins as an incitement on the tastes of the mainstream eventually becomes adopted within the system.

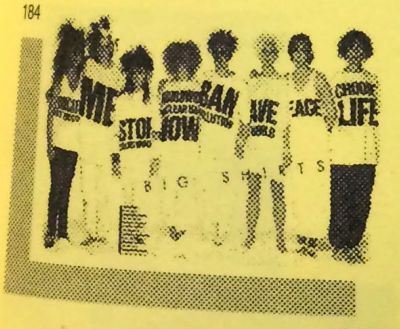
As an edge wears off, the elements representing shock play a new role in a consumer society. I experienced the late punk, hardcore, and skateboarding subculture in the mid-90's as a transitional period that was in a visible process of appropriation by the mainstream. In blurring the boundaries, the popular culture validated a particular coded system.

A Walnut Skate Ramp and Gold-Plated Skate Rail by Andrew Lewicki creates a comic utopian prospect. The objects remove the rebellious spirit and immediacy of DIY and replace it with labor and high-end materials. These contradictions highlight the repositioning of a subculture at odds within the mass culture. The post-pop designer generously contributes to and pays attention to this ever-expanding sign system.

Robert Venturi's chair for Knoll combines a cartoon version of a classic Queen Anne with two patterns at odds; one from a floral tablecloth and the other pulled from the hash marks of a bank security envelope. The

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT

184



185



186



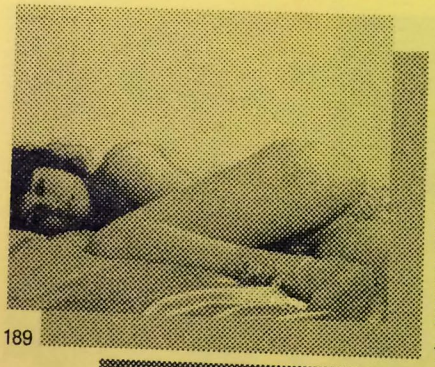
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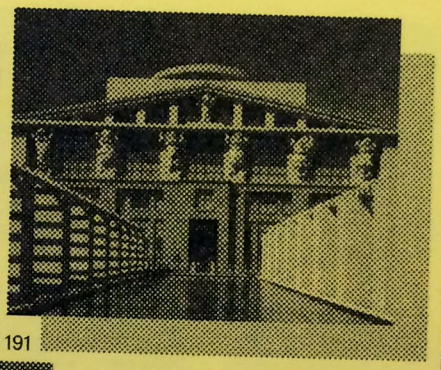


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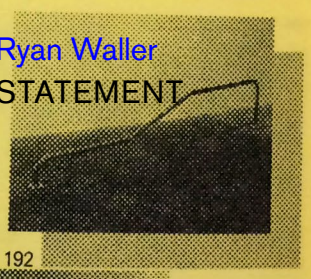


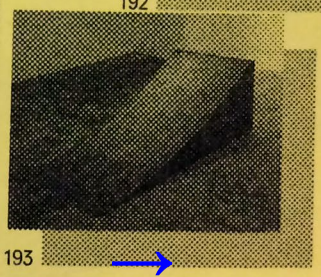
189 French Playboy, March 2008
190 Laura '94, John Kacere, 1994
191 Walt Disney Studios, Michael Graves, 1992
192 Gold-plated Skate Rail, Andrew Lewicki, 2007
193 Walnut Skate Ramp, Andrew Lewicki, 2007
194 Chippendale Chair, Robert Venturi, 1987
195 Pee Wee Herman, press photograph, date unknown
196 It's Not Art (That Counts Now) from Preview, Allen Ruppersberg, 1988


189


191

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT


192


193


190

combination of multiple signs collapsing into one another resulted in the creation of something brand new.

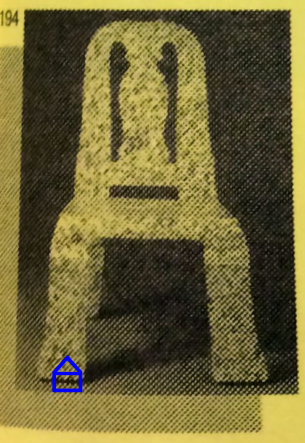
Similarly, multiple dialogues existed within Pee Wee's Playhouse–one innocently aimed at children and television executives, and one that required exclusive knowledge of gay male icons and homosexual fantasy figures in order to unveil a sub-text.

I'm interested in making work that is referential as a result of an expanding image culture. Images and signs that result from multiple reference points still allow for a traditional interpretation, but also room for a more loaded, humorous or ambivalent reading.

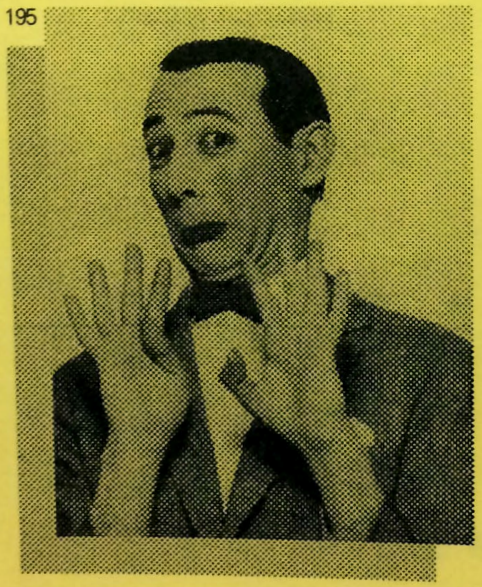
The work that I'm attracted to often uses images of real life that are not always real life; statements that don't necessarily reveal their sources or intentions; art that's not always art; graphic design that's not always graphic design; but this work still manages to communicate to each of us on an individual level.

Ryan Waller
STATEMENT

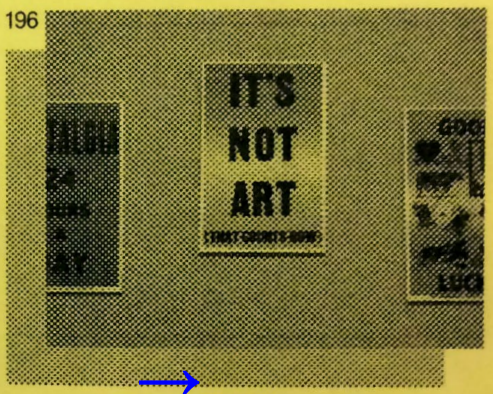
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195



196



I didn't have much of a thesis. The writing in the back of my book was from a lecture given at the beginning of my second year, and attempted to find precedents for my possible thesis. My thesis writing was the annotated images. These were descriptions of projects and notes about how peripheral images and ideas related to my images and ideas.

That's really just to clarify.

The work I was doing at Yale was really a natural way of working for me. And trying to contain it (in a book, in a piece of writing, in a term) was tricky. I don't think I did it very well, but it does still feel right. I was working similarly before, though unconsciously. Afterwards, I was more confident in that approach (infusing recognized language and imagery as a readable layer). That is how I work now, and it's the same as ("same as" just autcorrected to sambas) when I graduated.

I didn't get a job out of school. I sort of forget what I was doing. Odds and ends, and then I went to Switzerland on a Fulbright. I worked on a book there that fictionalized visual relationships between their and my culture. I found it so exciting to see James Gandolfini in a Rolex or an excessive number of cartoon bears used for Swiss brands meant for adults. In the end I kept the work I made private, perhaps because it wasn't so universally exciting.

That work was very thesis-y, though. I can't imagine going back and altering the thesis. It's almost a time capsule of the ideas from a period of personal reflection. Changing it now would be odd… Maybe if I could change something it would be to credit the title I used in the lecture ("The Hippies are Back and They're Punks") to the band Times New Viking. They had an album called "Rip it Off".

Ryan Waller
RESPONSE

→

Dave Yun

Perhaps it is easy to claim that graphic design is a relational activity. Designers define process in terms of relationships all the time: hierarchy, composition, and color are just a few fundamentals that require the task of weighing one element against another. The primary aim of the graphic designer—communicating messages—often involves relationships between client and designer, designer and colleague, and subsequently, designer and viewer. Considering the whole range of relational activities surrounding design, it's clear that relationships are not just part of the process, they define the practice of graphic design.

Where previous notions of this discipline center on problem solving, translation, form-giving, or authorship, design now is more a matter of negotiating relationships than anything else. More specifically, it is a matter of recognizing difference between things, forming connections between them, and structuring the outcome. This outcome, meaning the end result of the design process, is a more fluid notion than ever, considering the participatory means that interactive technology has made possible in the last twenty years. Viewers and readers become authors and designers of interactive, participatory, and collaborative works. The designer is there to negotiate or structure this relationship. No longer confined to urban environments, heterogeneity and multiculturalism are propelled by new channels of communication: different people in different places are more connected then ever. With the ubiquity of personalization, blog commenting, and user ratings, it is now taken for granted that a website can be a user-controlled experience. The question is no longer 'if' users can interact, but 'how' to structure or un-structure the meetings and collisions that are formed through networks. Thus, these differences must be managed amongst the ever broadening spectrum of communicative spaces.

A methodology for negotiating relational difference can start with simple one-to-one interactions. There are two reasons for this. First, things can often be better understood when faced with their opposite. A black and white image be-comes more bold and graphic as its contrast is increased. A color can be understood differently as it is paired with different colors. Or the way humans are often inclined to oppositional behaviors. Søren Kierkegaard expands on this:

> This is the chief imperfection of all things human, that the object of desire is first attainable through its opposite. I shall not speak about the multitude of temperamental types which ought to keep the psychologist busy (the melancholy temperament has the great-est comic sense; the most exuberant is often the most idyllic; the debauched often the most moral; the doubtful often the most religious), I shall merely recall the fact that an eternal happiness is first descried through sin.[1]

Second, the encounter has the capacity to yield an unpredictable or unexpected outcome. This can apply to interpersonal relations, situations, systems, and even language, as Bruce Nauman writes:

> Roland Barthes has written about the pleasure that is derived from reading when what is known rubs up against what is unknown, or when correct grammar rubs up against non-grammar. In other words, if one context is different from the context that was given to you by the writer, two different kinds of things you understand rub against each other. When language begins to break down a little bit, it becomes exciting and communicates in nearly the simplest way that it can function: you are forced to be aware of the sounds and the poetic parts of the words. If you deal only with the unknown, you cannot communicate at all. There is always some combination of the two, and it is how they touch each other that makes communication interesting. Too much of one or the other is either unintelligible or boring, but the tension of being almost too far in either direction is very interesting to think about.[2]

Nauman brings up a vital characteristic of relationships: tension and balance. Interpersonally, tension has the ability to stretch and change a relationship into something new and different. An argument, fight, or disagreement can often give rise to the most profound learning experiences. As

Dave Yun
STATEMENT

communication, tension can challenge viewers to make connections and draw conclusions on their own. Images separated by formal and conceptual distance, when placed together, can allow the viewer to build the bridge between them. It is the tension between two things that provokes an unplanned, unexpected, or unpredictable result.

The idea of tension is particularly useful in considering graphic design as an organizational activity. Specifically, how can tension filter into designed systems and programs? Perhaps it is helpful in this regard to imagine all systems as relationships between structure and freedom. First, systems should be set up in a way that allows for openness and flexibility. Some things stay, other things change. Then, the things that change should push up against the things that stay, producing a dynamic tension that expands and contracts. Systems set up expectations that help establish trust with the viewer: a folio can always be found at the bottom of the page, headings are always in bold. But it is the shifts, variables, even things that break a system, that actually engage a viewer. Variables give the viewer responsibility, participation, and investment in the content. Variables allow a viewer to ask what is being communicated, rather than always being told.

Looking at the range of activities in a design practice, there are several interpersonal relationships to consider. Collaboration between designers is now practically a given. In the current landscape of graphic design studios, partnerships seem to be more present then ever: Mevis and Van Deursen (Amsterdam), Dexter Sinister (New York City), Project Projects (New York City), and 2x4 (New York City), to name just a few. These studios contrast earlier models such as Total Design or Pentagram, where individual voices remain distinct and more predictable. The objec tive of more recent collaborations is not to blend voices, but to build relationships that are transformative and progressive. This kind of collaboration requires a certain level of difference and friction in order to promote change over time. Still, partnerships cannot operate without trust and a set of shared values.

Similarly, the relationship between client and designer can become not something to be avoided or diminished, but an avenue for exploration and development. The model of brief/proposal as completely separate acts can be blurred by the interaction of an open relationship, where intentions of each party are laid bare. Here, the objective is not for the designer to 'get inside' the mind of the client, but for both parties to inform and influence each other. Perhaps this can help push the occupation of graphic design away from being a service and towards being an undertaking of greater value and influence. Graphic designers should avoid viewing clients merely as content-providers, and clients should not relegate designers to form-makers. As with collaboration between designers, the client/designer relationship requires respect and trust from both parties. A high level of trust can provoke work that exceeds both parties' expectations, and can foster transformative relationships.

A third interpersonal relationship has already been mentioned: between designer and viewer. Is it possible to think of the viewer also as another collaborator, rather than a static receiver of information? How can viewers participate in shaping messages, hierarchy, and making meaning? Obviously, technological means provide mechanisms for user feedback and participation. Perhaps designed spaces (on and off-line) can be thought of in terms of exchange situations rather than one-way communications. Spaces that allow the participatory acts of users to make meaning, complete the exchange, or enable communication of a message. Openness in design can leave room for users to create their own hierarchy or form their own connections: this does not have to be about democracy, but about provoking individual agencies and revealing needs or motivations. A message board. A graffiti-covered train car. A tree with initials carved in it. Thrift stores. Sign-up sheets. Sandboxes. These 'designs' represent varying degrees of openness, where users are presented with situations of exchange, connection, and communication. The objective is less to transfer one message from designer to viewer, and more to facilitate new modes of connection.

Continued on page 85

Dave Yun
STATEMENT

Continued from page 76

Again, beneath these connections is an underlying necessity of trust—between designer and client, collaborator, viewer, user, or reader. Modified messages, spam bots, and persuasive politics permeate the communicative spaces we inhabit. In the interest of authenticity, it becomes increasingly necessary for the designer to stay close to what he knows, who he knows, and where he lives. While maintaining collaborative relationships between designers, content-producers, clients, and users, it is also necessary for the designer to maintain autonomy and conviction of personal intent. Autonomy is essential for clarity of voice, fulfillment in one's work, and honest communication within a relationship, all factors that help establish trust. Thus the relationship between autonomy and exchange becomes an equally important negotiation experience.

Dave Yun
STATEMENT

It started with my parents [16/30]. My father came here from South Korea and met my mother, of German descent, in Yonkers, New York. They were married in December of 1965. Until the Supreme Court case of Loving vs. Virginia two years later, many states still held laws preventing interracial marriage. I grew up with a level of tension intrinsic to my parents' union: different cultural values and practices to be mediated, day in, day out. It's become clear to me that this tension is something I can't live without, in the way I think, work, and make. I'm looking for ways of replicating this relationship: the differences of two distinct individuals, provoking something new or unexpected. It's motivated things I've done, and things I'm after.

Back in college, I read an article in the Times about a study comparing Asian and Western cognitive ability.[3] It claimed that Asians have a tendency to acknowledge two opposing or contradictory ideas at the same time, preferring a dialectical approach over a logical argument. Westerners, according to the study, tend to rely more on formal logic, detaching objects from their context to avoid contradiction. Wondering which of these preferences might be true for myself, I could see myself leaning at times towards both. And there was my answer.

My questions about difference in cultural understanding led me to the anthropology department of my college. I was sold on the discipline after the first week of an intro level class, drawn to the methods as much as the theory: ethnography, field work, participant-observation. I like the practical, relational approaches of anthropology. The idea of participant-observation takes place all the time: we enter new situations, we watch how people around us act, we learn from those actions, we repeat them, and we draw conclusions about the way humans do things. What interests me about participant-observation is the way the method relies on relationships to reveal new insights and information. Rather than relying on surveys, numbers, and

STATEMENT Dave Yun

figures, as other social sciences do, the anthropologist develops close relationships with group members willing to provide information. The collection of information is thus contingent upon the level of trust between group member and observer. Furthermore, this information can only be interpreted in light of the anthropologists' own set of cultural assumptions. It becomes a game of measuring distance between yourself and another.

My undergrad academic studies usually came second to playing music, specifically jazz. People often speak of parallels between jazz and graphic design: rhythm and syncopation, improvisation, repetition. At one point a graphic design teacher advised me to consider 'scat' singing in relation to a project I was working on—I couldn't find a connection there. I think I may have been resisting these correlations because I didn't want to fall into tropes that reduce jazz to a set of formal techniques that can be extracted and applied to page layout. Still, I keep coming back to jazz, not because I find it to be a currently relevant art form, but because there's something connecting jazz and myself and my work as a graphic designer. I think of jazz as a form that inherently pushes two ideas against each other: structure and freedom. The former requires precision, context, collaboration, and repetition. The latter demands boldness, exploration, experimentation, abandon. There was a moment in high school jazz ensemble, when the notes ended on my sheet music, and I discovered the potential of this form. To play something completely open, unwritten, and undetermined: anything is possible. All the scales, practicing, studying, and listening collapse into a moment where decisions must be instantaneous, and a melody is improvised, never to be reproduced again. I'm interested in this kind of dissonance between structure and freedom, the meeting and departing, the tension and release that draw you into an improvisation. For me, it's these moments when jazz can actually communicate something about the human experience.

I'm after moments like this in my graphic design work, where two elements work together to produce an unexpected outcome or experience, and I hope whoever's listening can put them together in their mind. It's like Duchamp's bicycle wheel [16/30], an object that has no practical function on its own, but the meanings and functions of the two objects involved, and the way they are fitted together, unleashes a whole new set of meanings and asks a whole new set of questions. The joining of wheel and stool undermines the functions of each: mobile versus sedentary, connected by circular form. I think my work has been better at positioning meaning for the viewer than allowing them to do the fitting on their own. Given my intentions with graphic design—to directly communicate messages—this is a difficult line to walk. How much to teach viewers about connections that are being made, and how much to let them decide for themselves?

For the past year, I've been interested in how this way of thinking can start to define my practice. First, I try to see ideas in terms of collisions, meetings, dialogues, arguments, exchanges, discussions, conversations, or connections between two elements. Second, I'm looking for ways that these types of pairings can unfold in a range of design activities: collaboration, concept, form, editing, delivery, and media, to name a few. For a project requiring editing and compiling my classmates' thesis texts, I chose to pair up designers based on differences in the way they spoke about their ideas [20/30]. The resulting conversations provoked insights and background information that demonstrated their theses without stating them. I also used a relationship as starting point in a book about my grandfather's work as a photographer [26/30]. The book acts a 'dialogue' between him and me, a starting point for future projects.

Continued on page 83

Project Number/Relationship

02/30 Accidents and Discovery
05/30 Abstraction and Representation
06/30 Abstraction and Representation
26/30 Acker, Lloyd and David Yun
07/30 Mediator and Disputer
05/30 City and Park
01/30 City and University
27/30 Center for Openess & Sincerity and Yale Graphic Design
05/30 de Bretteville, Sheila Levrant and David Yun
06/30 de Bretteville, Sheila Levrant and David Yun
13/30 de Bretteville, Sheila Levrant and David Yun
08/30 Determinate and Indeterminate
02/30 Discovery and Accidents
25/30 Discovery and Navigation
04/30 Disorder and Order
07/30 Disputer and Mediator
21/30 Donnelly, Neil and David Yun
16/30 Elliman, Paul and David Yun
11/30 Faith and Public
14/30 Fong, Karin and David Yun
21/30 Franke, Uli and David Yun
12/30 Government and Individual
13/30 Harry and Harry
13/30 Harry and Sally
28/30 Helfand, Jessica and David Yun
19/30 Hori, Allen and David Yun
24/30 Hori, Allen and David Yun
08/30 Indeterminate and Determinate
12/30 Individual and Government
12/30 Information and Privacy
21/30 Lehni, Jürg and David Yun
11/30 Mahan, Dave and David Yun
14/30 Manning, Tom and David Yun
15/30 Manning, Tom and David Yun
23/30 Manning, Tom and David Yun
07/30 Mediator and Party in conflict
08/30 Meier, Ken and David Yun
18/30 Meier, Ken and David Yun
21/30 Meier, Ken and David Yun
22/30 Meier, Ken and David Yun
23/30 Meier, Ken and David Yun
18/30 Messer, Sam and David Yun
09/30 Mevis, Armand and David Yun
01/30 Michaelson, Dan and David Yun
03/30 Michaelson, Dan and David Yun
25/30 Michaelson, Dan and David Yun
19/30 Music and David Yun
10/30 Mystery and Puzzle
25/30 Navigation and Discovery
04/30 Order and Disorder
30/30 Paris, Norm and David Yun
05/30 Park and City
07/30 Party in conflict and Mediator
01/30 Passage and Privilege
08/30 Photographic and Vector
03/30 Physical Space and Virtual Space
09/30 Play and Rules
12/30 Privacy and Information
12/30 Private and Public
01/30 Privilege and Passage
30/30 Public and David Yun
11/30 Public and Faith
12/30 Public and Private
23/30 Public and Yale School of Art
07/30 Pullman, Chris and David Yun
10/30 Puzzle and Mystery
10/30 Removal and Saturation
05/30 Representation and Abstraction
06/30 Representation and Abstraction
22/30 Rock, Michael and David Yun
09/30 Rules and Play
13/30 Sally and Harry
10/30 Saturation and Removal
02/30 Scott, Doug and David Yun
13/30 Self and Self
13/30 Sellers, Susan and David Yun
15/30 Space and Typography
08/30 St. John, Todd and David Yun
14/30 St. John, Todd and David Yun
15/30 Typography and Space
01/30 University and City
04/30 van Assen, Henk and David Yun
10/30 van Assen, Henk and David Yun

Dave Yun
STATEMENT

12/30 van Assen, Henk and David Yun
15/30 van Assen, Henk and David Yun
29/30 van der Velden, Daniel and David Yun
29/30 van der Velden, Daniel and Yale Graphic Design
05/30 van Deursen, Linda and David Yun
20/30 van Deursen, Linda and David Yun
08/30 Vector and Photographic
03/30 Virtual Space and Physical Space
02/30 Weingart, Wolfgang and David Yun
09/30 Yale Critics and David Yun
20/30 Yale Designer and Yale Designer
27/30 Yale Graphic Design and Center for Openness & Sincerity
29/30 Yale Graphic Design and Daniel van der Velden
23/30 Yale School of Art and Public
17/30 Yun, Cheryl and David Yun
26/30 Yun, David and Lloyd Acker
05/30 Yun, David and Sheila Levrant de Bretteville
06/30 Yun, David and Sheila Levrant de Bretteville
13/30 Yun, David and Sheila Levrant de Bretteville
21/30 Yun, David and Neil Donnelly
16/30 Yun, David and Paul Elliman
14/30 Yun, David and Karin Fong
21/30 Yun, David and Uli Franke
28/30 Yun, David and Jessica Helfand
19/30 Yun, David and Allen Hori
24/30 Yun, David and Allen Hori
21/30 Yun, David and Jürg Lehni
11/30 Yun, David and Dave Mahan
14/30 Yun, David and Tom Manning
15/30 Yun, David and Tom Manning
23/30 Yun, David and Tom Manning
08/30 Yun, David and Ken Meier
18/30 Yun, David and Ken Meier
21/30 Yun, David and Ken Meier
22/30 Yun, David and Ken Meier
23/30 Yun, David and Ken Meier
18/30 Yun, David and Sam Messer
09/30 Yun, David and Armand Mevis
01/30 Yun, David and Dan Michaelson
03/30 Yun, David and Dan Michaelson
25/30 Yun, David and Dan Michaelson
19/30 Yun, David and Music
30/30 Yun, David and Norm Paris
30/30 Yun, David and Public
07/30 Yun, David and Chris Pullman
22/30 Yun, David and Michael Rock
02/30 Yun, David and Doug Scott
13/30 Yun, David and Susan Sellers
08/30 Yun, David and Todd St. John
14/30 Yun, David and Todd St. John
04/30 Yun, David and Henk van Assen
10/30 Yun, David and Henk van Assen
12/30 Yun, David and Henk van Assen
15/30 Yun, David and Henk van Assen
29/30 Yun, David and Daniel van der Velden
05/30 David Yun and Linda van Deursen
20/30 David Yun and Linda van Deursen
02/30 Yun, David and Wolfgang Weingart
09/30 Yun, David and Yale Critics
17/30 Yun, David and Cheryl Yun
26/30 Yun, David and Susan Yun
24/30 Yun, David and Roxane Zargham
16/30 Yun, James and Susan Yun
26/30 Yun, Susan and David Yun
16/30 Yun, Susan and James Yun
24/30 Zargham, Roxane and David Yun

Dave Yun
STATEMENT

Some of my formal explorations this year stem from an interest in recombinative techniques: working with a kit of parts, pulling things apart, putting them back together again [19/30]. I find this way of working falls flat if it lacks difference: if forms or ideas come from the same world, they stay in that world, and don't move beyond themselves, lacking the tension to form a unique identity that didn't previously exist. If they are different enough, in form and meaning, they can push against each other enough to create dissonance and tension. I'm looking for ways that formal tension can provoke conceptual tension, and vice versa. For example, the anamorphic skull in Hans Holbein's painting 'The Ambassadors' pushes its way out of the canvas, yet the imagery of a skull is completely native to that realm of Renaissance painting.

I spent a lot of time last fall sitting at other people's desks, collaborating on projects. I made a conscious choice to work alone as little as possible. The collaborative process I used was always integrated and mutual, never separate. Roxane and I argued a lot, agreed on very little. It took a lot of trust and belief in each other to get to a point where we could move forward. A typical back and forth between me and Rox, in the early stages of our project [24/30]:

'I think this should be pink.'
'Really?'
'Yeah, pink.'
'I gotta go.'

Amazingly, towards the end of our project, we were agreeing on almost everything, as if we could anticipate each other's thoughts before they were spoken.

'We should dye some water pink, then freeze it, then take photos of it as it melts.'
'Yes. Then we should trade clothes and take a photo of ourselves.'
'Absolutely.'

Rox and I were able to manage the collaboration by establishing a level of trust, which would straddle our differences, and allow us to push each other in directions we wouldn't normally go. This is unlike my recent experiences with Ken, a very different designer from Rox. Ken and I have spent the last three years pushing each other and learning together, establishing trust and boundaries. We don't always agree, but sometimes it goes like this [18/30]:

'Yes. Letter Gothic.'
'Yes. Grey paper.'
'Yes. Fold it twice.'
'Yes. Image on the inside.'
'Yes. You are a genius.'
'Yes. So are you.'

Now I'm trying out a less tethered collaborative process with my sister Cheryl [17/30], who is a visual artist. Instead of working directly together on one project, we're sending things back and forth each week. Focusing more on process, exchange, and development, rather than an end result.

Thursday, February 14, 2008

Dear Cheryl,
Happy Valentines Day!
Here are some notes on what we talked about last night, in terms of our collaboration:

We decided it should be more process-oriented, with less focus on an end result, more on a communication and transposal of ideas. The form is completely open ended, and begins with whatever you send me in the mail. We will send our ideas back and forth to each other on a weekly basis, always responding, reacting, or iterating upon the previous piece. Each response must be postmarked or emailed within a week of when the previous piece was

received. It may be sent sooner than a week. Each piece must be accompanied by a dated and signed memo. The memo may or may not include thoughts, explanation, or challenges to the receiver.

Let me know if you have any additions!
David

PS. what's your story this Saturday?

I'm thinking that this method of collaborating is more directly connected to the dynamic and temporal aspects of a human relationship, in terms of gradual transformation and maturation—the way a relationship between two people grows and changes over time. Still, the relationship is only as open as the parties involved are, and we should stay aware of that.

At the moment I'm interested in discovering how design can facilitate relationships by setting up structures or situations that enable encounters. I've only started to get at this, by making t-shirts that function as posters on people [29/30], announcing a visiting critic. Or by making a poster that references other posters made about a workshop [28/30]. Or by passing out maps that offer open ended navigational ideas for bikers looking to find new paths through the city [25/30]. These projects represent ideas that aren't necessarily closed or one-directional, but offer opportunities for viewers/users to finish the meaning or direct their own outcome. In practice, I hope to continue exploring how relational difference can be used as a method and a means of communication. I'm interested in how process, production, and result can reinforce meaningful relationships between myself, the people I work with, both clients and colleagues, and the people we're talking to.

Do you feel that your thesis informs your work today?

Not directly. When I think back to my time in graduate school, it's the myriad of experiences that collectively informed my work then, and led to the work I'm doing now. I always saw the thesis as one project amongst many that were about a dialogue of development for me. Trying things out, experimenting, and learning from those trials. The thesis is typically viewed by students (including myself at the time) as a project that defines who you are as a designer and who you will be as a designer. I don't think that's true at all.

That said, I still stand behind the central tenet of my thesis. Design for me has continued to become more and more about development of relationships than about the specific distinctions of type size or placement. While those things are extremely important and interesting to me, I find that the success or innovation of my design work is driven by the quality and characteristics of the relationship I have with a collaborator or client.

Did it inform your first job out of school? Do you feel as though it's more relevant now than it was when you graduated, or vice versa?

The first year out of grad school was hellish for me (and it seems for many of my colleagues) in that I was struggling with this question a lot—too much. It was tricky to re-contexualize my perspective in the broader context of the studio, 2x4, where I was working at the time. I had to pull back from the narrow lens of my thesis work and rethink my approach to design in light of the actual conditions of a studio. You have to go from thinking only about your own interests to the interests of multiple team members, at a broader scale and within the requirements of the project. How do you apply your thesis to a project that's been running for two years already, with multiple team members, specific design requirements, budgetary constraints, a design system in place, and several levels of decision-makers? You no longer have the luxury of time and agency to apply your thesis—it has to be immediate and operating under the surface of everything you do.

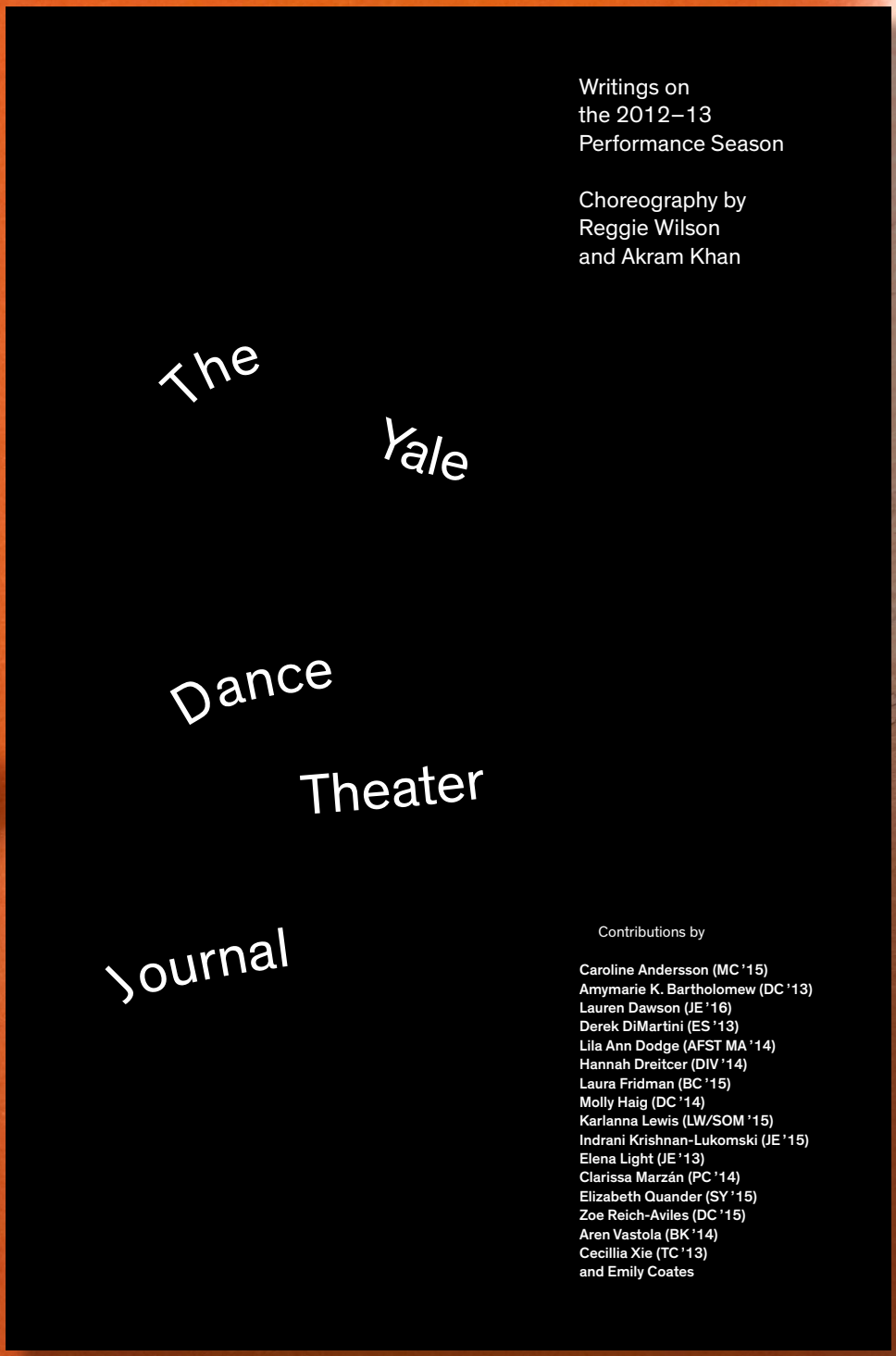
If you could go back and adjust your thesis, would you? How so?

I feel like there's always a sense in design where you feel like it's never finished—things could always be better, more refined, or stronger in some way or another. But it's one of the enduring qualities of print—the fact that once it comes off the press, it is what it is. The second it is printed, it becomes history.

Is there a part that still sticks with you, and other parts that seem irrelevant now? Which parts?

On a tactical level I'm still pretty interested in the idea of binary thinking in design. I tend to make things that tell two stories at once, and look for different ways to do this—whether through a set of images that come in pairs and are combined in different ways, or through a telling of two separate stories that weave in and out of each other in a book or website, for instance. I like the oscillation between friction and coalescence that you can use to communicate ideas and stories.

MORE


Writings on
the 2012–13
Performance Season
Choreography by
Reggie Wilson
and Akram Khan
The
Yale
Dance
Theater
Journal
Contributions by
Caroline Andersson (MC '15)
Amymarie K. Bartholomew (DC '13)
Lauren Dawson (JE '16)
Derek DiMartini (ES '13)
Lila Ann Dodge (AFST MA '14)
Hannah Dreitcer (DIV '14)
Laura Fridman (BC '15)
Molly Haig (DC '14)
Karlanna Lewis (LW/SOM '15)
Indrani Krishnan-Lukomski (JE '15)
Elena Light (JE '13)
Clarissa Marzán (PC '14)
Elizabeth Quander (SY '15)
Zoe Reich-Aviles (DC '15)
Aren Vastola (BK '14)
Cecillia Xie (TC '13)
and Emily Coates

elaborate striking dynamic, directional, dimensional changes. From what Reggie tells us, besides looking directly at his work, this essentially rhythmic proclivity has an influence in African diasporic expressive culture, and a palette of movement or qualitative motifs drawing on quite diverse cultural and aesthetic heritages—touchstones including South African gumboot dance, downtown postmodern dance of New York City's final 20th century decades, Spiritual Baptist traditions of Trinidad and Tobago, classical ballet, Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin, Tai Chi… Reggie encourages quick, high contrast, even surprising changes of physicality: though some precision is wanting in the description, technically it requires throwing oneself into another body, and then another, and then another. And technically this requires, as Reggie has emphasized and as seems quite fruitful, a "core orientational focus" on, in, the pelvis. A unifying orientation of bodily focus for a diversifying or multiplying assumption of body.

Lauren Dawson
January 28, 2013

I walk around the dance studio slowly tuning into my own body. My feet lift up and down in a rhythmic pattern as I feel my weight shift from heel to toe and heel to toe again. It is all about body awareness, but rather an internal awareness of how I feel within myself. The physicality of dance is of course one of its main components that can easily be lost in over analysis and intellectualization. It's true that different forms of dance and post-modern dance especially are artistic expressions of the choreographer and their influences, but this expression of art is incased within the body.

The Pelvis

Never before have I taken the time to truly open my mental awareness to the way every portion of my body moved in space. While walking around, tuning in to the soreness in my shoulder blades and the lengthening of my joints, I realized everyone has the same limbs in the same place but every body is a very distinct and different piece of artwork. These four divides are all held together by one pivotal point; the pelvis. The pelvis is the central point for the body. It acts as a grounding point from which all other types of movement can flow.

In performing Reggie's movements the importance of the pelvis is vital for me in keeping myself grounded. Whenever I was confused in the movements, which to be completely honest happened quite often, I thought about the position of the pelvis. Yet I was still confused. My pelvis was not ready for this large responsibility. I've never depended on it this much before and I felt I had a large amount of catching up to do in accordance to its abilities. Perhaps my pelvis will step up to the challenge that it has been given. With time, effort, and of course that fantastic technique called rehearsal.

Karlanna Lewis
February 1, 2013

What are we talking about? Talking about talking? Talking about writing? Talking about words? Now I'm just riffing…
—Reggie Wilson

If dance-writers faced one eternal question, the question would be how to put words to a wordless art. Yet to me that very challenge is enticing. What words can do is preserve the experiential essence of a dance for those who didn't experience the dance in the moment, or even for those who did, to preserve the experiential essence in the best approximation of a time machine—taking the dancers and their watchers back to a moment when bodies were giants and gravity was a force under human control.

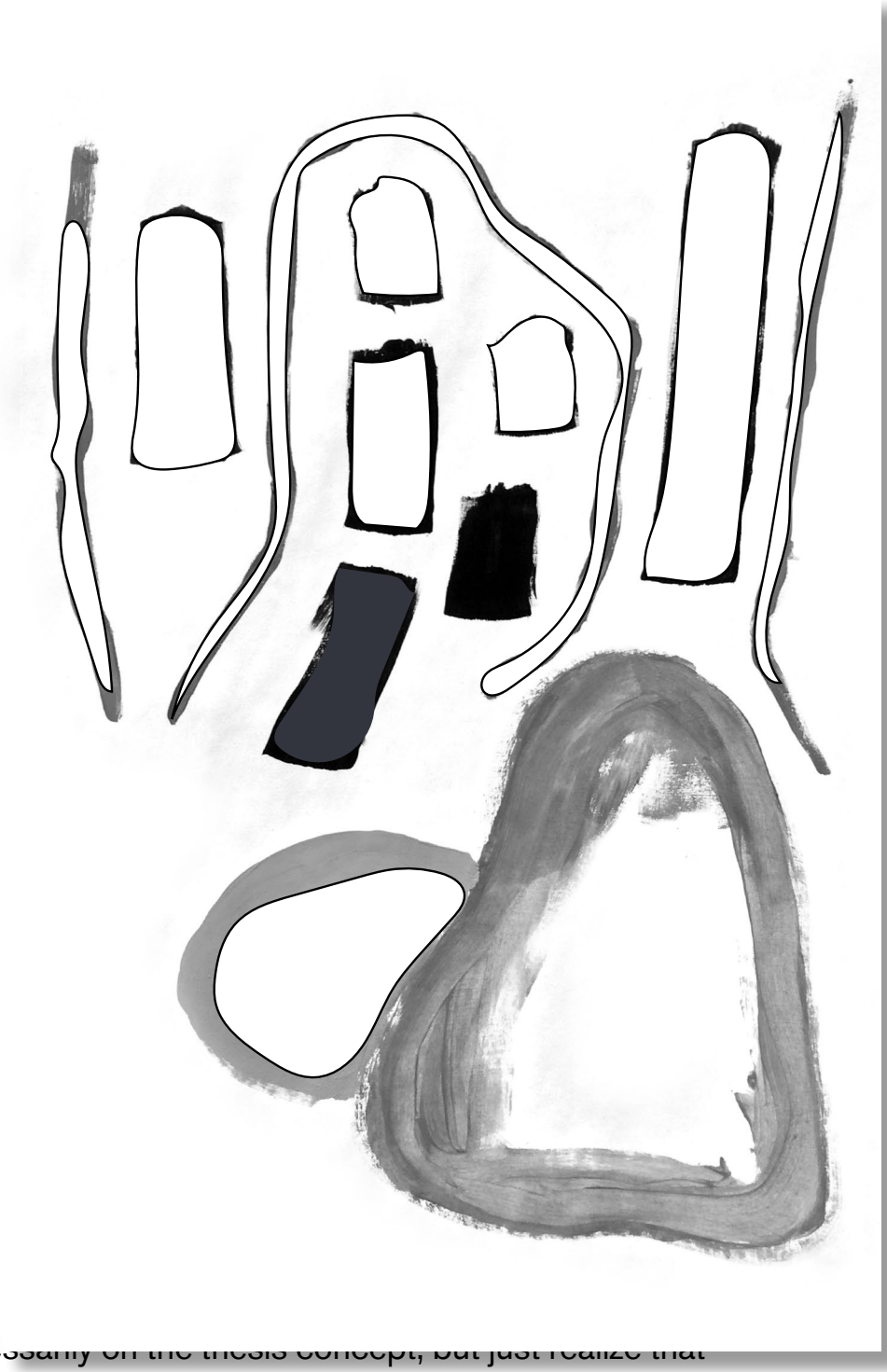
I once heard dancers have five strengths—technique, musicality, beauty, poetry and charisma. A strong background in ballet or modern dance gives technique, but in Mr. Wilson's work, musicality is a new animal. Counts are as subjective as gravity in his work.

Can a Body?

Counts are as fluid as the spine rolling up and down its three positions. Counts don't adhere to the standard 5-6-7-8 of "dancers' counts," just as up becomes larger than "dancers' up."

Counts are the spaces between the clap, or the stomp, or the switch of pelvis. And in those spaces too is the beauty. "Don't be dramatic," Mr. Wilson urged us, "just move the pelvis." See from the pelvis, and the pelvis moves by its own vast intelligence.

but… After school, we all worked in different places. Ariel [Apte Carter, founding partner] went to Doyle Partners, Sarah went to 2x4, and I went to Cooper Hewitt Museum. Anyway, we just missed each other, so we picked up various freelance projects so we could c
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there's different ways to get to it if you're feeling stuck.

Barbara [Glauber] was the one who helped me with many of my roadblocks by saying, you know, "Focus on



Scale: ---
Articles: TITLE
Category: BOOK

Do you feel that your thesis informs your work today?

Yes. If not the thesis specifically, my time at Yale has undoubtedly informed how I think about and practice design, everyday.

Yoonjai Choi
RESPONSE

Did it inform your first job out of school? Do you feel as though it's more
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Looking ba
evant to me
least during my time there) was differentiated from that of comparable programs because the focus was on the visual method, instead of the visual subject. It was about learning through doing, rather than learning through learning, which can never be irrelevant.

to disturb these frameworks and intervene in them.
Purely "generative" design leaves little room for
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Michel Fouc
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again, to quote Peckham, the use of
"pre-existent patterns in the mind
to organize perceptual experience."
The notion of chaos or disorder when it comes to

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3, SPRING 2014

The Yale Review of

International Studies

The Acheson Prize Issue

FIRST PLACE

The Historiography of Postwar and Contemporary Histories of the Outbreak of World War I
Tess McCann
91

SECOND PLACE

Sinking Their Claws into the Arctic: Prospects for Sino-Russian Relations in the World's Newest Frontier
TaoTao Holmes
75

THIRD PLACE (TIED)

The Invisible Ring and the Invisible Contract: Corporate Social Contract as the Normative Basis of Corporate Environmental Responsibility
Dilong Sun
57

Four Ways to Matter in Pakistan: How Four of Pakistan's Most Important Politicians Retained Power in Exile, 1984–2014
Akbar Ahmed
33

MORSE PECKHAM. MAN'S RAGE FOR CHAOS: BIOLOGY, BEHAVIOR, AND THE ARTS. NEW YORK: SCHOCKEN BOOKS, 1973. 33.

10 Katsnelson, 72

11 Ibid., 80.

12 In some of his peasant portraits, Malevich removes even color as a defining characteristic. See Sarabianov, 147.

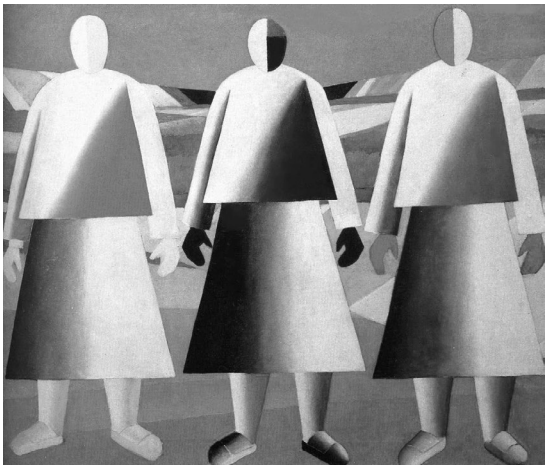
13 One should note, too, that the titles of many of Malevich's peasant paintings communicate a similar idea: nearly all of them provide the viewer with only the gender of the figure portrayed. These generic titles further remove the individual from the painting in quite a radical way.

14 Elena Basner, "Malevich's Paintings in the Collection of the Russian Museum (The Matter of the Artist's Creative Evolution)" in *Kazimir Malevich in the Russian Museum*, ed. Yevgenia Petrova, St. Petersburg: State Russian Museum, 2000.

the viewer with a figure devoid of flesh, a corpse-like peasant. What is so powerful about this result is that hopelessness and despair emerge quite naturally from Malevich's extreme visualization of the Soviet dream: by reducing the peasant to a universal figure, Malevich has created a cold, lifeless figurine. Given the actual plight of the peasants under the Stalinist program of forced collectivization — a plight that Malevich, who often self-identified as a peasant, must have been aware of and sympathetic towards — this implication becomes all the more poignant.[10]

This *reductio ad absurdum* of Soviet iconography forms a common thread that runs throughout Malevich's second peasant cycle.[11] In *Girls in the Field*, Malevich pushes the de-individualization of the peasant even further. Aside from coloration, none of the three girls display any defining characteristics.[12] The three figures stand on the same plane; in the same, inactive stance. Here, Malevich pushes his use of white to define the figure to its extreme. The color on the peasants' torsos entirely fails to convey a sense of volume. The forms are left empty, hollow. The girl on the far left, perhaps the best example of this effect, appears in places as merely the outline of a figure. The individual seems to have been cut out of the painting by the hand of a censor.[13]

Here one should also note two tropes that, though absent from *Complex Presentiment*, are near staples within Malevich's second peasant cycle: first, a reliance on cross-like perspective; and second, an emphasis on the emptiness of the inactivity of the peasants' hands. In *Girls in the Field*, as in many of Malevich's peasant portraits, the three figures stand pressed up against the picture plane with the landscape unfolding behind them towards a high horizon line. The result is a clear "cross" shape.[14] This compositional detail alone contains some of the same double-meanings as Malevich's engagement with Socialist iconography. Is one to take the cross to signify the peasant's messianic power, or his crucifixion? Second, the painting displays Malevich's interest in gesticulation — or rather, the lack thereof. Here, the girls stand with their hands hanging empty



Kazimir Malevich. *Girls in the Field*, 1928–32.
Oil on canvas. 106 x 125 cm.

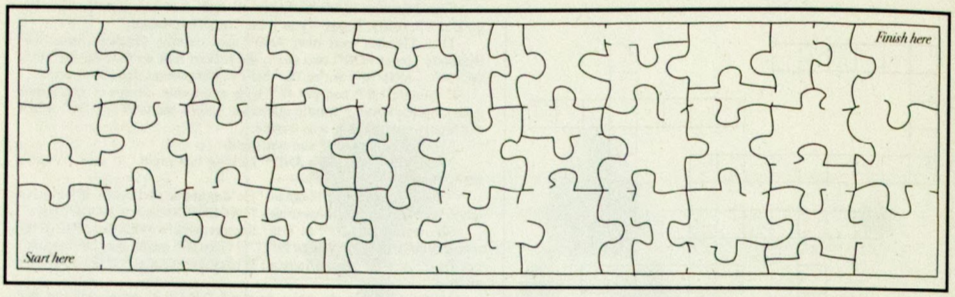
to disturb these frameworks and intervene in them.
Purely "generative" design leaves little room for
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again, to quote Peckham, the use of
"pre-existent patterns in the mind
to organize perceptual experience."
The notion of chaos or disorder when it comes to

MORSE PECKHAM. MAN'S RAGE FOR CHAOS: BIOLOGY, BEHAVIOR, AND THE ARTS. NEW YORK: SCHOCKEN BOOKS, 1973. 33.

Will's work seems to come from a different kind of conversation: about everyday objects and about the kind of everyday that the objects suggest. This made me think about Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby's "Design Noir" which I had read a few times, but it was only now that some of their ideas had become somewhat clearer to me. In a way Will's work was an example of what they called "[illegible]". The technologies remai values change; the opp the society remains th changes. Where I disa science fiction -- writ Bruce Sterling have be nteresting "value ficti believe that their idea radically different und play as a critical tool

I'm attracted to these objects can pro to think about the ro it's like two worlds c books, furniture, pack they make you wonde brought them into be idea of design as "s talked about in his l things that we make, an everyday context, a different kind of e really know where thi don't completely fit, other. but that's goo this. I'm just trying do it, and in the me going. All I wanted b list.

JIGSAW MAZE



up FOR[67] THAT[13] when she got TO[11] THE[5] bottom. Holding THE[5] lantern AS[30] high AS[30] she could, she cried: "Mortmain, I've come TO[11] rescue YOU[43]! It's Topaz, Mortmain! You're safe!" FATHER[8] shot up into a sitting position, gasping: "Great GOD[41]! What's happened?" Then she swooped on TO[11] him AND[55] THE[5] bed went down wallop, ITS[24] head AND[55] foot very nearly meeting over them.

Choking with laughter, Thomas AND[55] I[1] dodged out OF[4] sight AND[55] down THE[5] steps. FROM[72] THERE[45] we could hear a perfect hullabaloo—FATHER[8] was managing TO[11] curse, MAKE[16] waking-up noises, AND[55] laugh all at THE[5] same time, while Topaz did a sort OF[4] double-bass cooing.

A SIMPLE ACROSTIC

The first letters of each of your answers read ***DOWNWARD*** *spell out where Rose is hiding.*

1. - A ballerina's skirt.
2. - You get this cut off at the barber's.
3. - A little bit more than necessary.
4. - Put this on a letter.
5. - A large mammal in the ocean.
6. - A weapon, when combined with a bow.
7. - After the sun goes down.

"Hadn't YOU[43] better leave them together FOR[67] a while?" said Simon.

"Yes, let her WORK[21] off her worst histrionics," I[1] said TO[11] Thomas.

We waited IN[23] THE[5] courtyard until we saw THE[5] lantern coming down THE[5] mound. Then Simon tactfully decided not TO[11] BE[46] seen AND[55] went TO[11] wait IN[23] HIS[20] car.

"Shall we vanish, too?" said Thomas.

"NO[86], we'd better get THE[5] meeting over."

We ran towards them AS[30] they crossed THE[5] bridge. Topaz was hanging on TO[11] father's arm—I[1] heard her say: "Lean on me, Mortmain, lean on me"—LIKE[44] little Lord Fauntleroy TO[11] HIS[20] grandfather.

"Are YOU[43] all right, FATHER[8]?" I[1] called brightly.

"My dear young jailers," said FATHER[8], rather exhaustedly. "Yes, I[1] THINK[2] I[1] shall survive—IF[42] Topaz will stop treating me AS[30] IF[42] I[1] were both THE[5] little princes IN[23] THE[5] Tower."

AS[30] HE[28] went into THE[5] kitchen Topaz hung back, grabbed my arm AND[55] did ONE[3] OF[4] her most endearing quick changes into hard-headedness.

"Cut back AND[55] see what he's written," she whispered.

We dashed up THE[5] mound; luckily I[1] still had Simon's torch.

"Heavens, this IS[9] a thrilling moment," I[1] said AS[30] we stood IN[23] front OF[4] THE[5] rustic table. "Perhaps ONE[3] day I[1] shall BE[46] describing IT[40] IN[23] father's biography."

Thomas took THE[5] stone off THE[5] FIRST[37] pile OF[4] paper. "Look, this IS[9] THE[5] beginning," HE[28] said AS[30] THE[5] torch lit up a large

SECTION A

HE[28] snatched THE[5] top sheet off, then let out a gasp OF[4] astonishment.

The whole OF[4] THE[5] page underneath was covered with large block capitals—badly formed ones, such AS[30] a child MAKES[79] when learning TO[11] write. AS[30] I[1] moved THE[5] torch along THE[5] lines, we read:

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"Oh, Thomas!" I[1] moaned. "We've turned HIS[20] brain."

"Rubbish. YOU[43] heard how sanely HE[28] was talking—"

"Well, perhaps he's recovering but—don't YOU[43] see what's happened?" Suddenly IT[40] had come back TO[11] me. "Don't YOU[43] remember what I[1] shouted under THE[5] door when I[1] was SO[50] upset? 'Write

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT: HANDWRITING EXERCISE

He's growing up.

of knowledge. This recycling of sounds, images, and forms implies incessant navigation within the meanderings of cultural history, navigation which itself becomes the subject of artistic practice. Isn't art, as Duchamp once said, "a game among all men of all eras?"[24]

Technology certainly made this process easier, but it didn't create it. Electronic music and the sampler are two of the

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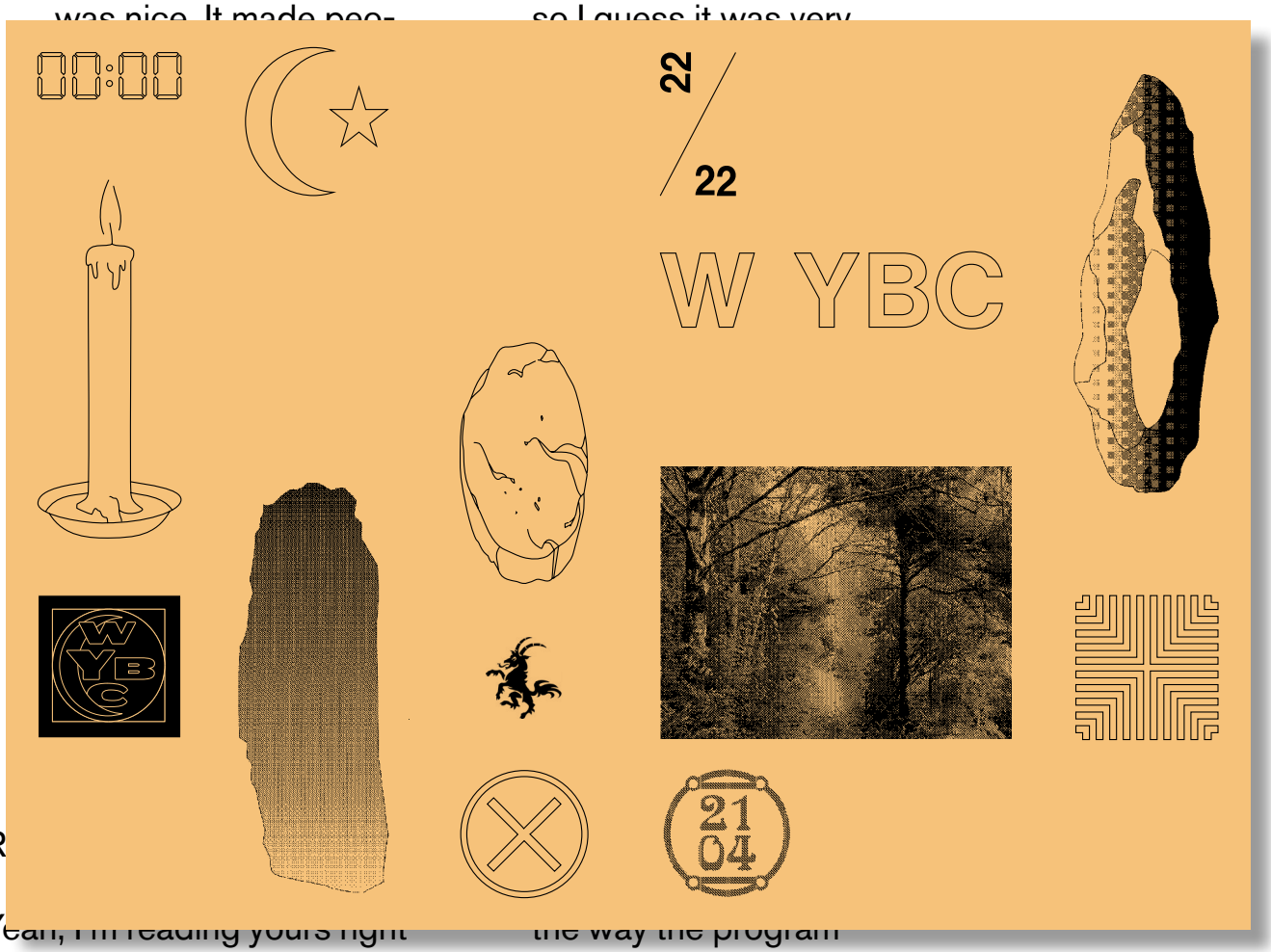
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finds answers. Being

for the program. They were made around the program. Like the Whitney posters, the sign. You know, the sign was nice. It made peo-



R

Yeah, I'm reading yours right now. "The world is a mess!"

No, that's not my thesis. That's my presentation from September. Which is even worse. Jesus, don't read that part. It was trying so hard.

See, mine would have made sense if Paul hadn't gotten involved. Like I had something that made a semblance of sense… and then I had a chat with Paul, and it all went downhill from there. But essentially, the thesis was a catalyst for me to abandon graphic design as a discipline, so I guess it was very

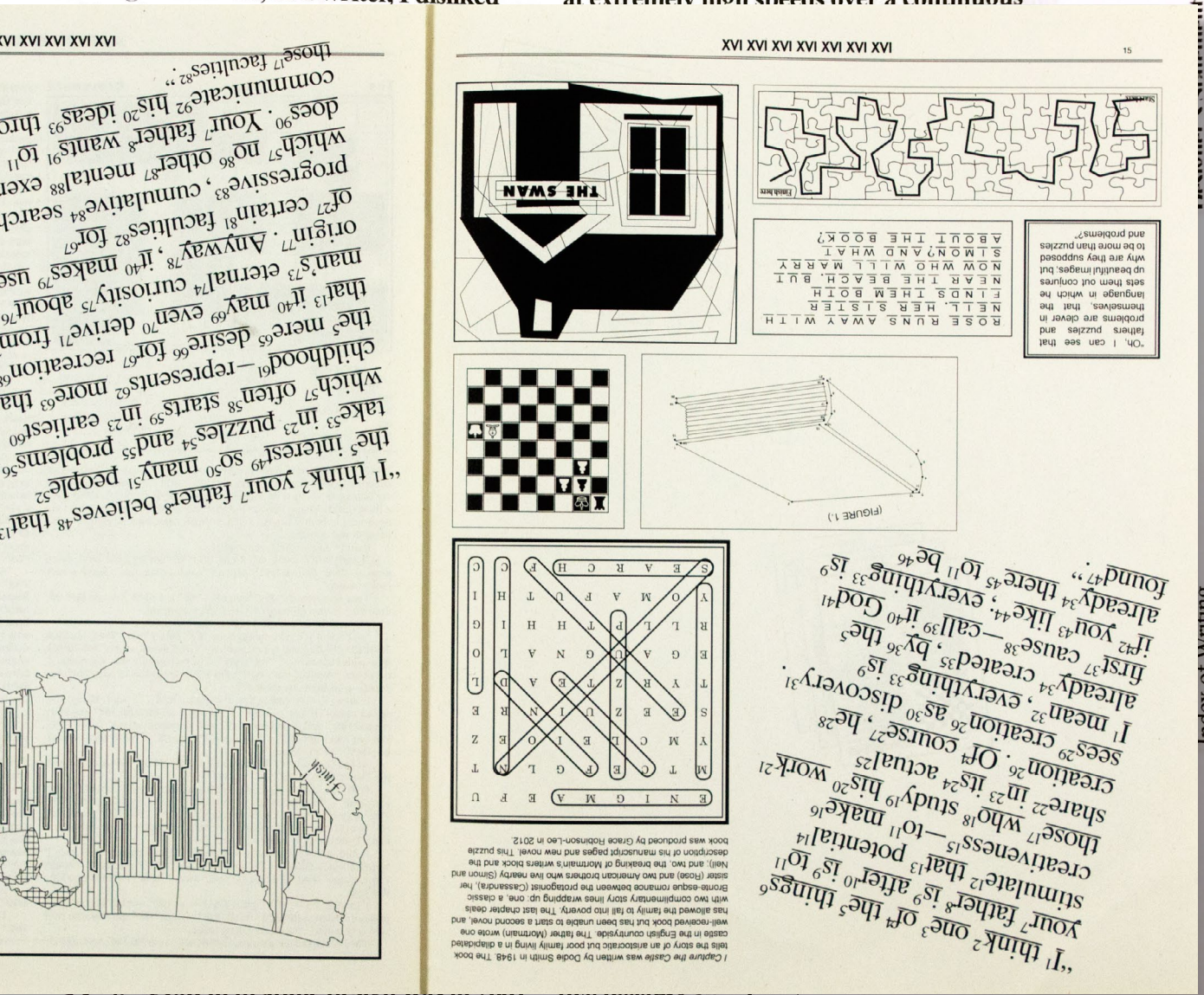
the way the program was structured, it was the most important thing. Like you could almost do nothing, but if you turned a thesis book in at the end, they were cool.

But essentially, isn't the thesis supposed to be a diary or a record of your two years there?

I think when we were doing it, it was in a weird spot, where it was no longer, like, a 200-page

In many ways, I entered the field of graphic design distrusting it. Before design, my undergraduate economics and history papers were often written in various reactionary forms including a fictional story, a lecture, and in video. At home, I made in-camera edited videos including a western, a horror, and a racist satire, and my first act of design was an animated gif-intensive website manipulated through a free download kit. These acts were representative of an unhoned working method in irony and naive "rule-breaking." Later on, as a writer, I disliked

Photoshop, my job was to trace out people from the day's most compelling Images, which would then become Image masks that would be pasted throughout the rest of the newspaper. The Image masks were especially difficult because they usually involved the intricate tracings of people's hair, often tousled while passionately conducting an orchestra or scoring winning soccer goals. But the most difficulty came from having to complete each one in under 5 minutes. I quickly learned to enjoy operating software at extremely high speeds over a continuous

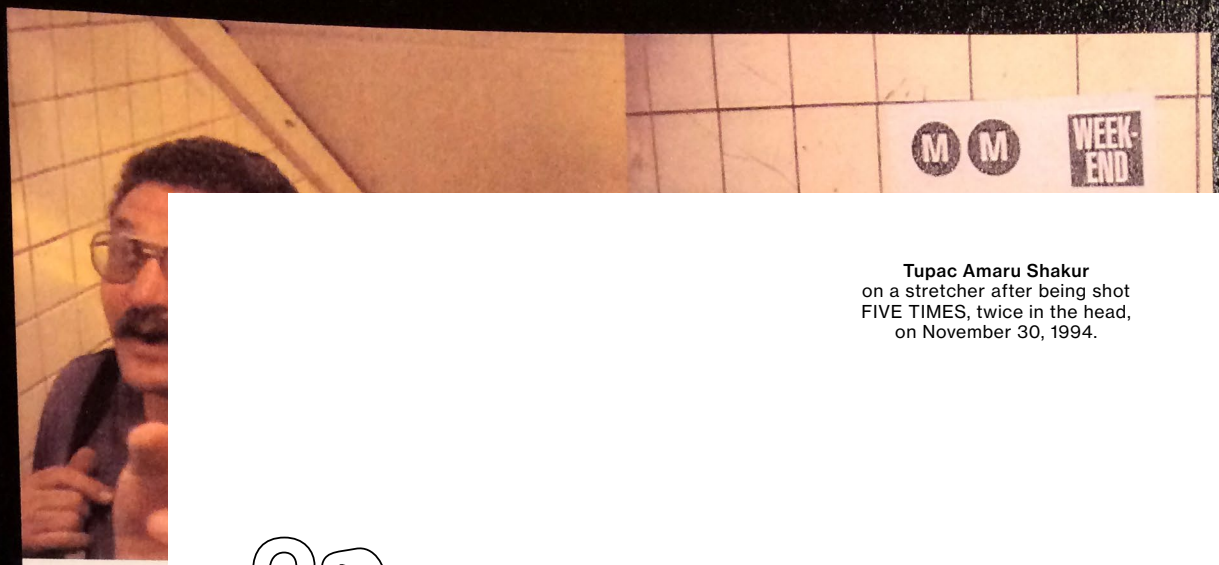


My first job in graphic design was in 2001 as a nightshift production artist for the Sing Tao Daily newspaper in Hong Kong. Using

tive became an adventure of "documentary fiction" revolving around a fictional character named Ronald Chang, a Google search for

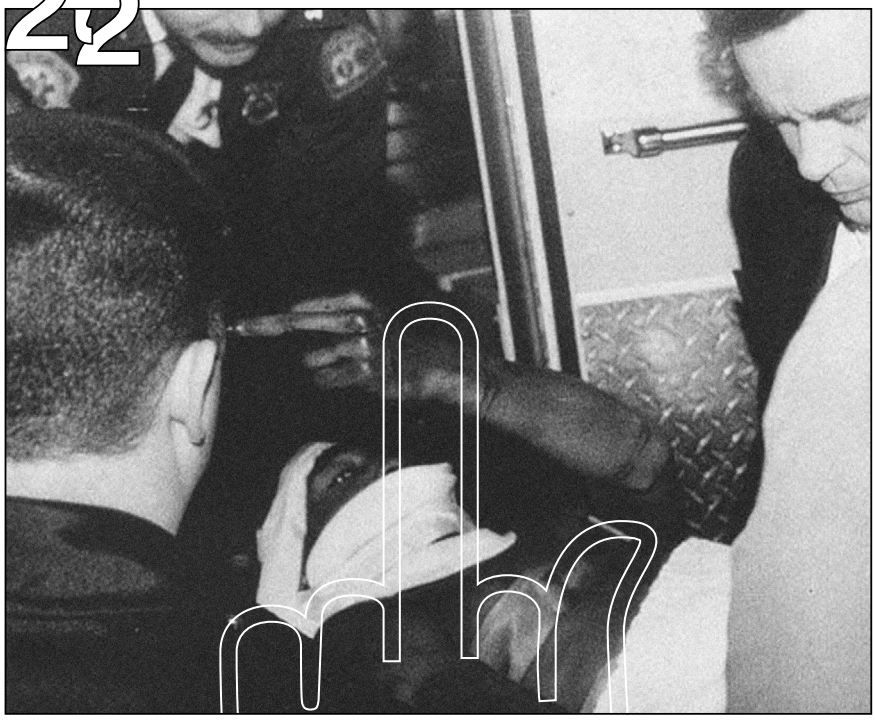
Gross Cost of Printing:

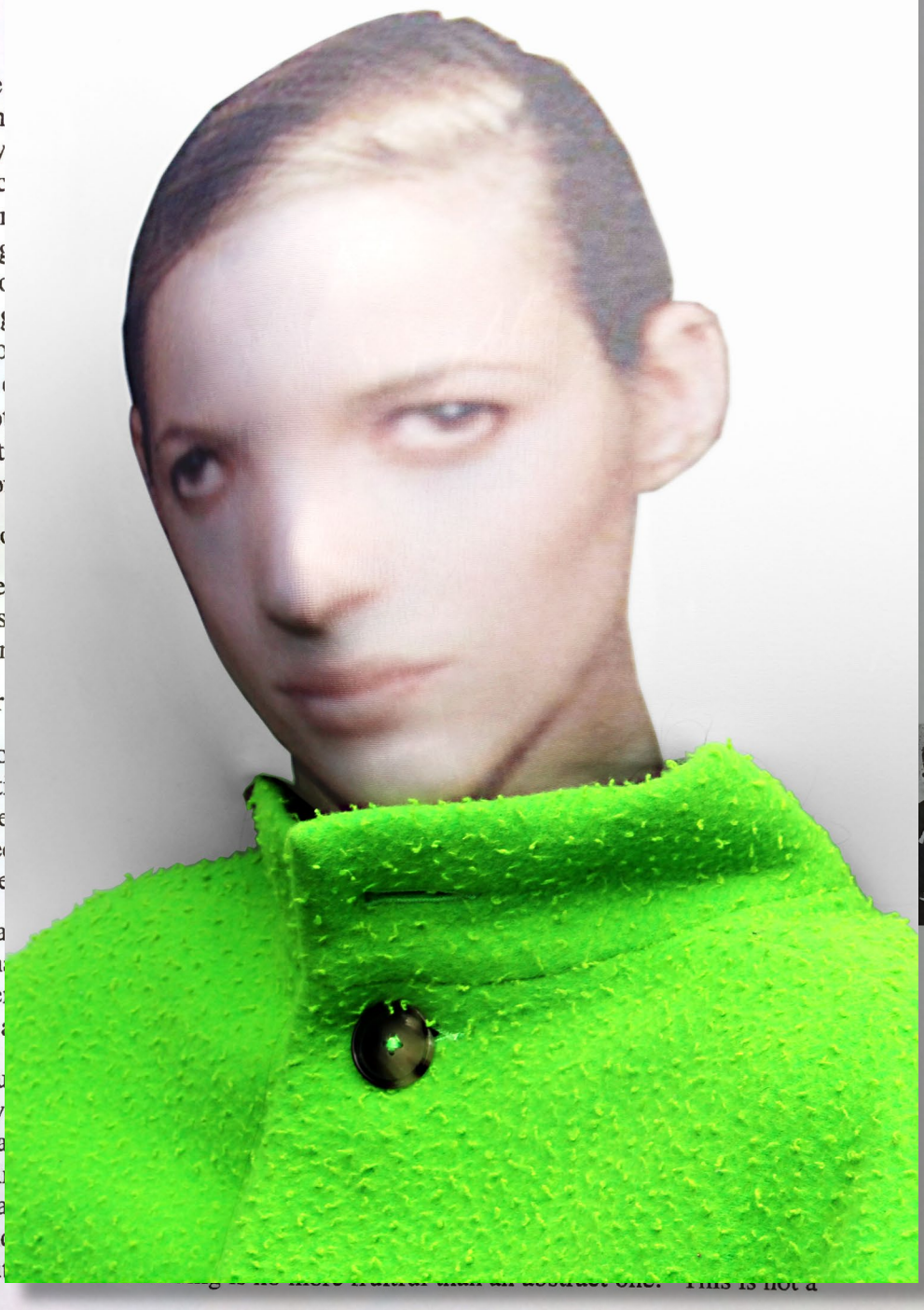
Gross Cost of Paper:
$0.30



Tupac Amaru Shakur
on a stretcher after being shot
FIVE TIMES, twice in the head,
on November 30, 1994.

22







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The Autocolloto is built from a scanner, cd player, keyboard, mouse, a few thousand computer instructions and an initially blank screen. With source materials of their choice, users create a typewriter collage that dances to their music; elements interact in

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SO neat and tidy in the retelling.

Muriel Cooper

IBM Model 01 Typewriter
1935



I'm certain it also sounds rather
self-congratulatory. It's also relatively
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ing, it was absolutely nothing like I
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the Visible Language Workshop was moved to another new home in building E15.



12 The Media Lab (and the Visible Language Workshop) were housed in I. M. Pei's Weisner Building, or E15

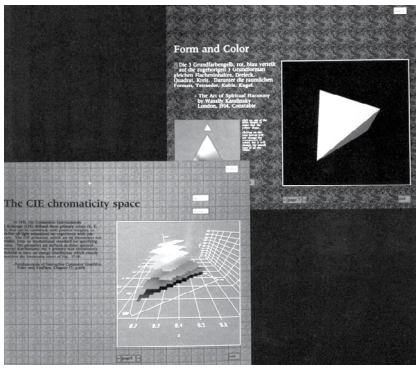
The notion that designers should use the tools of production themselves had dovetailed nicely with the evolution of technology and the potential graphic qualities of these new interfaces. A process that began with typesetting on the

Xerox Star Personal Computer
1981



7

The work of the Visible Language Workshop continued to move progressively away from print and towards the digital realm. However, Cooper remained concerned with the goal and methods of print, if no longer in its associated production methods: typography, display, and the inclusive relationship between designer and user were all investigated on the screen. An excellent example of the evolving approach and research can be found in a 1989 issue of *Design Quarterly* (the Walker Art Center's design publication). Cooper was the guest-editor, and the issue showcased several projects originating from research at the Visible Language Workshop.

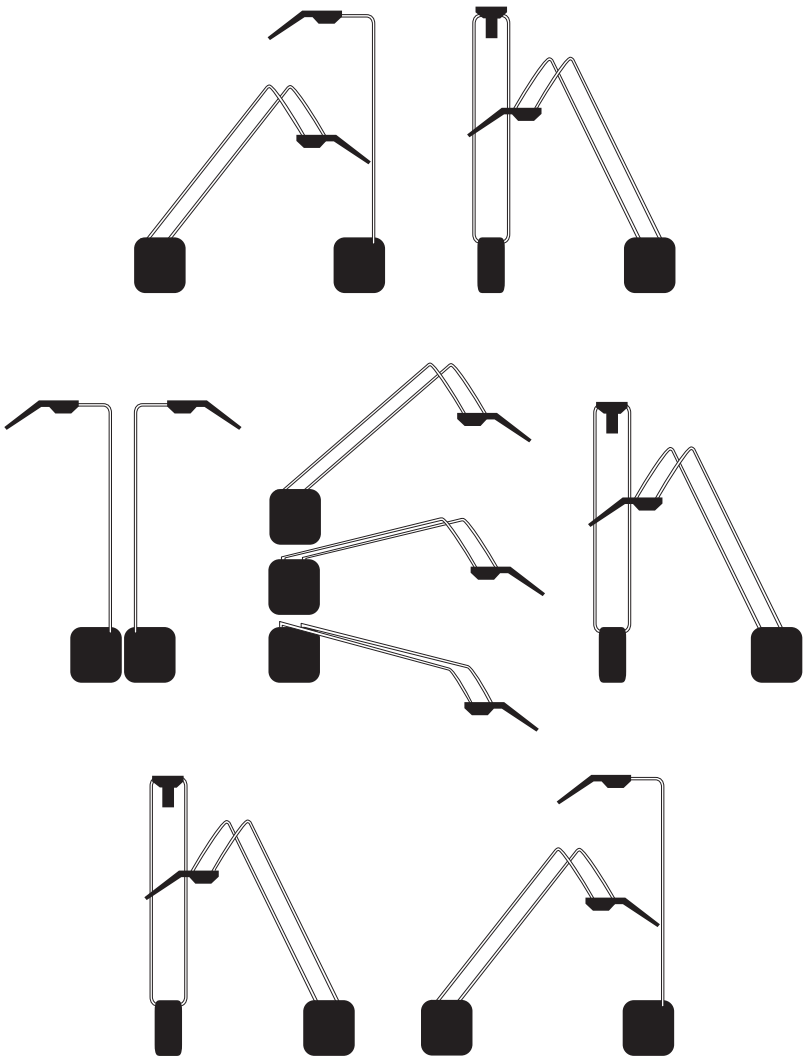


14 David Small's Fundamentals of Color electronic book, showing two "pages."

David Small developed *The Fundamentals of Color* (1987–88), an electronic book that "uses transparency to make shifts from English to German translations of the text, and includes an annotation editor that will save comments and replay them." The so-called "annotation editor" predicts the PDF format with its comment and mark-up functionality that, today, are a standard part of the user experience in a PDF reader like Adobe Acrobat or Apple's Preview.

Other work shown included a rendering by Massimo Ontani depicting a domestic scene. The elements in the composition were created using

ing, it was absolutely nothing like I expected. My time in New Haven



October 16*th*
30*th*
November 6*th*
2013



their opposite. A black and white image be-comes more bold and graphic as its contrast is increased.

argument, fight, or disagreement can often give rise to the most profound learning experiences. As

Some of my formal explorations this year stem from an interest in recombinative techniques: working with a kit of

Rox and I were able to manage the collaboration by estab-

